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CHRISTIAN COURIER
PER/BX/9401/C36

AUG 10 2011

Publication | August 8, 2011 | NO. 2918 | \$2.50

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CHRISTIAN COURIER



Canada demands donation refund from Kenya due to corruption

Kariuki Wangai

NAIROBI, KENYA – Following revelations of mass corruption, the Canadian government is demanding a refund of \$600,000 out of the roughly \$15 million it has donated to the Kenyan government over the last three years. The money was supposed to fund free, basic education for Kenyans. A forensic audit at the Ministry of Education led by a consortium of donors and released in June unearthed a major scandal, with up to \$49.5 million (4.2 billion in Kenyan shillings) of funds feared lost in a well-choreographed scheme involving ministry officials.

Now the donors want the Kenyan government to take responsibility and refund the amount that has been misappropriated under its watch. Leading the call for decisive action are Canada, Britain, Germany, the Netherlands and France who, between them, have donated close to \$150 million over the past few years to assist Kenya achieve universal basic education.

The money was meant for tuition, infrastructure and equipment costs for five and a half million pupils in 18,000 public primary schools. It is

channeled through the Ministry of Education to the schools, which are expected to account for expenditure to an Inspectorate based at ministry headquarters.

It had been billed as a rare success story of President Mwai Kibaki's government, with primary school enrolment rising from three million in 2003, when he was first elected, to over five million each year since 2007, when he was controversially re-elected. It is now emerging that a big chunk of the money has been ending up in the pockets of some ministry officials through an elaborate scheme that involved fake workshops, fraudulent loans and criminal diversion.

Officials would claim to have held empowerment workshops for teachers and other stakeholders in expensive hotels and pocket the facilitation fees. Now, auditors are asserting that lists of attendants in ministry files can not be authenticated. Huge amounts were also claimed for monitoring schools, with no proof of the officials having traveled.

Some of the funds were diverted and then withdrawn into the accounts of private schools not part of the program. In some instances, more money than was allocated was sent to select school accounts and then cashed through conniving school heads.

Strained relations

Canada is one of the top bilateral donors to Kenya, with a total of

See **Refund** on page 2

East Africa's famine, by the numbers

Mike Pflanz

FINI, Kenya (CSM) – The United Nations declared a famine in parts of Somalia on July 20, a move it rarely makes. The following numbers help convey the severity of the situation:

- 11.5 million – People needing urgent help across the Horn of Africa
- 78,000 – Somali refugees who have fled to Kenya or Ethiopia since May
- 6 per 10,000 – Children dying daily in Somalia's famine-hit regions
- 30 – Percentage of population so malnourished they need special feeding
- 20 – Percentage of fresh billion-dollar aid appeal funded so far
- \$300 million – Funds needed just for Somalia in the next two months alone
- 60 – Years since it was this dry in some areas
- 9 – Months since early-warning systems predicted potential disaster
- 4 – Months until rain is expected

See page 7 for CRWRC's increased response to the severe drought. For donation information, view crcna.org or call 1-800-730-3490.



Kuso Ali bathes daughter Suldun in a refugee camp. CSM

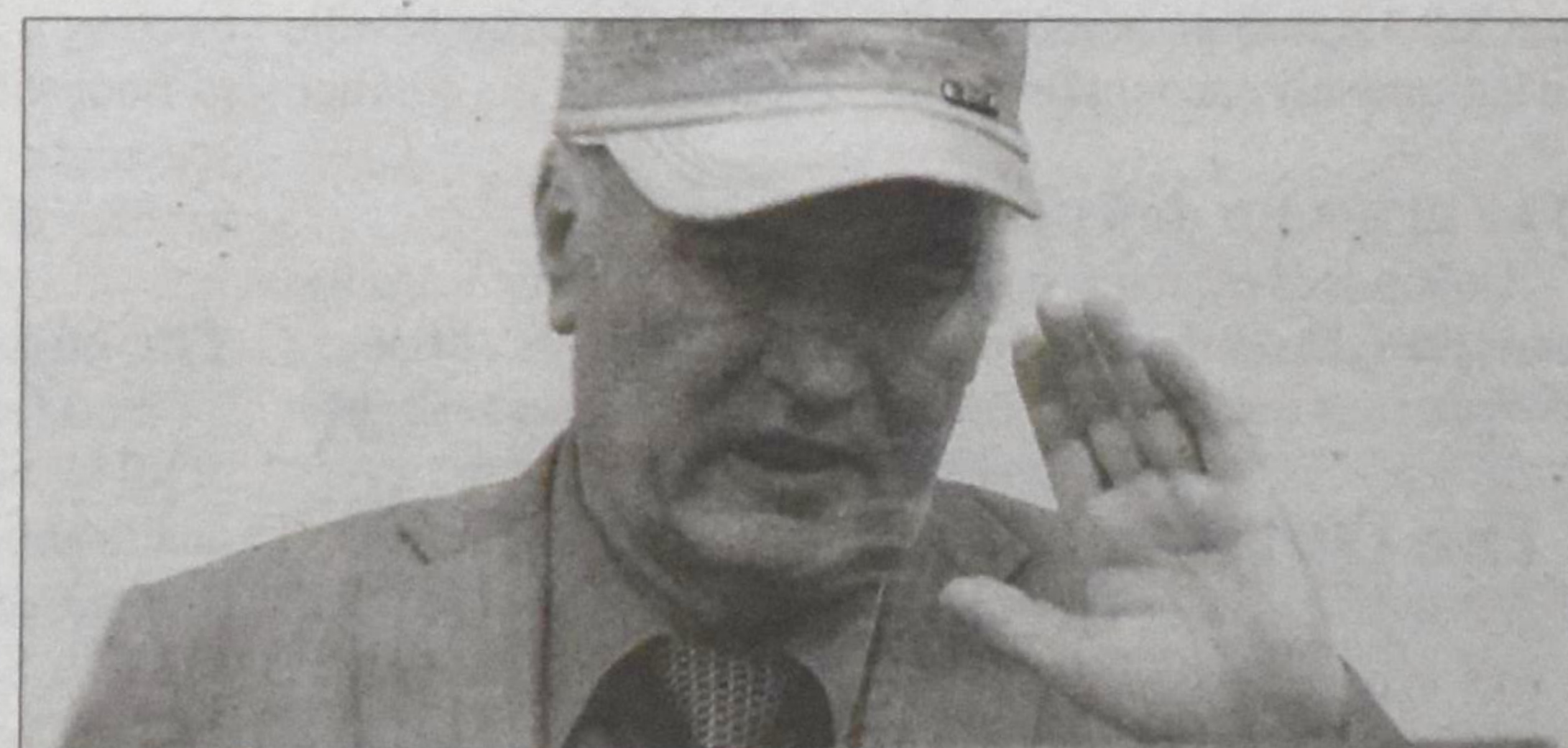


Dagahaley (Kenya) is the world's largest refugee complex. CSM

Mladic defies UN's war crimes tribunal

Harold Alkema

THE HAGUE – In the last days of July, the UN war crimes court in the Hague assigned a new lawyer to Ratko Mladic, the Serbian ex-general facing 11 counts of genocide. Mladic, now 69, has made two appearances this summer since his May arrest, each time in apparent ill health yet boisterous and defiant in court. He threw his arraignment proceedings into chaos by shouting at judges, refusing to comply with their orders and not entering pleas to any of the 11 charges against him. When presiding judge Alphous Orie entered a not guilty plea on his

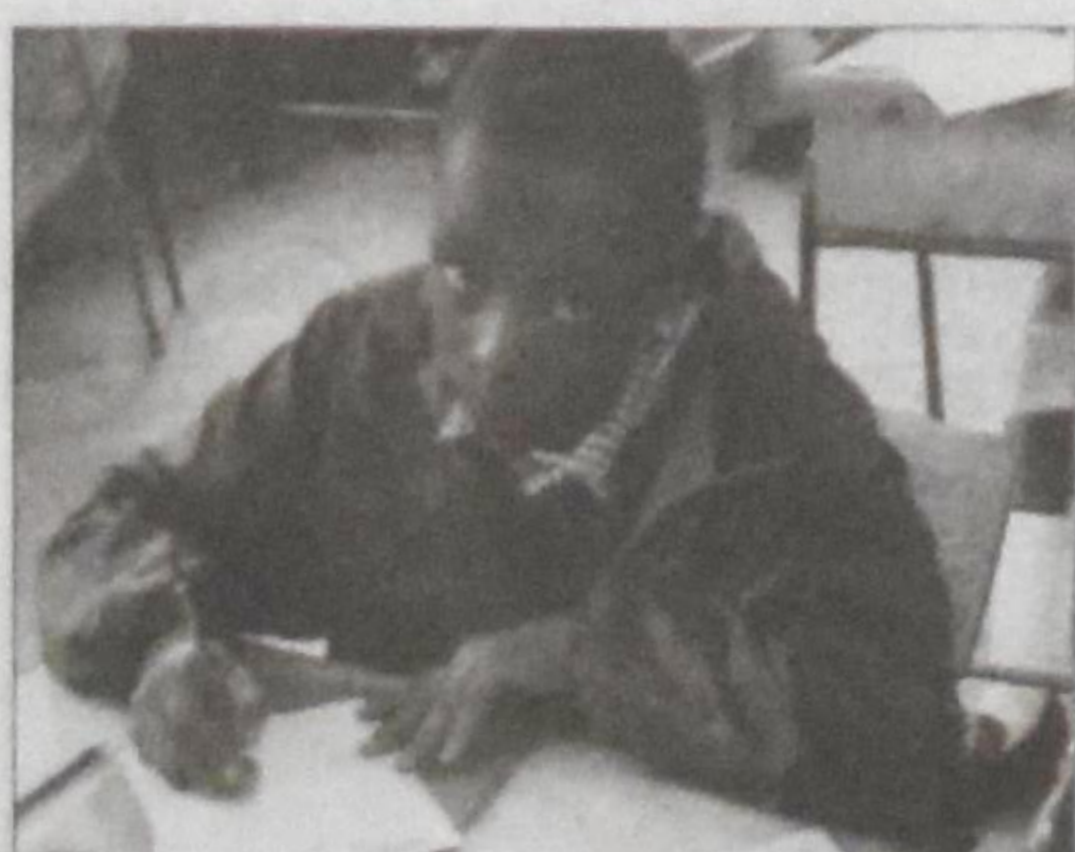


Mladic's courtroom antics win him no support.

behalf, following regular court procedure, Mladic exploded with anger, yelling "You want to impose my defense; what kind of court are you?" Previously, Mladic had

threatened to boycott the tribunal because he was not assigned the Russian and Serbian lawyers he had requested. Orie informed Mladic

See **Mladic** on page 2



Scam has "stolen from children."

News

Refund *continued*

\$31 million disbursed through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) in 2009 and 2010 alone, and it is not taking these allegations lightly. "We are demanding that besides the government of Kenya instituting investigations into the scam and taking decisive action against the perpetrators, our proportion of the stolen funds must be returned," says Canada's High Commissioner to Kenya David Collins.

"We are always deeply concerned by allegations of corruption. Our government will not tolerate any misuse of Canadian aid," adds CIDA spokesperson Scott Cautin. Canada has now frozen disbursement of aid to the education sector through the Kenyan government until action has been taken against the culprits. "We are exploring a variety of [other] channels for aid, including multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations," Scott explains.

Kenya's education sector has traditionally faced many



challenges. With high poverty levels and families surviving on less than a dollar a day on the average, many parents cannot pay fees for their offspring. Up to half of eligible children used to miss out on basic education until 2003, when the government introduced free learning. Even after that, however, the situation remained dire. The infrastructure is still poor, with some children learning under trees and others in dilapidated classrooms that pose physical and health hazards.

Canada has been instrumental in improving the situation, committing funds to the building of hospitable classrooms in disadvantaged areas, sinking boreholes for water and setting up sanitation blocks. Furthermore, Kenya's current educational system has borrowed heavily from the Canadian model. Dubbed 8-4-4 (eight years of basic education, four years of secondary education and four years of tertiary education), the system was initiated in 1985 on the recommendations of a taskforce headed by Canadian Professor Collins Mackay, then of McGill University. It aimed to equip students with vocational skills that were not addressed in the earlier 7-4-2-3 system.

'Stealing from children'

Besides funding the free learning program, the Canadian government has helped set up some institutions of higher learning. An enduring example is the Kenya Technical Teachers College, the premier institution for teachers of technical subjects in the East African region, built on a sprawling 75-acre plot opposite the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi.

Mr. David Collins, the High Commissioner, has expressed dismay at the turn of events at the Ministry of Education.

"It is stealing from the Kenyan child," he said in an interview. "We have been pumping money from the Canadian taxpayer to ensure that these children have a future to look forward

to. That those entrusted with doing this would seek to benefit from the program is untenable."

More dismaying to Mr. Collins and fellow diplomats in Nairobi is the casual approach to the scandal on the side of the Kenya government. Almost a month after the donors released their report, nobody has accepted responsibility. The minister in charge of education, Prof. Sam Onger and his predecessor, Prof. George Saitoti, under whose watch much of the money was pilfered, are both still serving in government. Only a handful of junior officers have been taken to court.

Observers fear that no action against the minister and his predecessor may be forthcoming, courtesy of the prevailing political climate. With just a year to the next general election in 2012, the president may be hesitant to sack key individuals in his camp despite assurances that action will be taken.

Kenyans of goodwill are looking unto donors such as Canada to tighten the screws in their demand for accountability. Civil society groups have expressed solidarity with the stand and are demanding that the architects of the scam be prosecuted and that the lost funds be recovered.

Kariuki Wangai (kigoto07@yahoo.com) is a publishing professional, freelance writer and father of three in Nairobi, Kenya.



Current Education Minister Prof. Sam Onger and his predecessor, Prof. George Saitoti below.



Typical classroom in a disadvantaged area.

Mladic *continued*

that the court registry, rather than the judges, would make the decision regarding his defense team. Mladic was so flustered by the ordinary conduct of the court that when Orić threatened to remove him if he did not cooperate, he replied with a quick, "Remove me."

At least one survivor of the Srebrenica massacre, which took the lives of roughly 8,000 Bosnian Muslims, is repulsed by Mladic's courtroom behavior. Hatidja Mehmedovic, in the Netherlands for the beginning of the trial, comments that "[Mladic] showed who he is and what he is like. He displayed no regret and doesn't want justice for the victims." Yet for all his bluster, no one can deny the seriousness of the charges facing Mladic. He has been accused of genocide for his role in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre. In addition, he was the chief military commander of the Bosnian Serb army in the 1992-1995 Bosnian War. That conflict killed nearly 100,000 people and left 1.8 million homeless. It will be difficult for Mladic to legitimately account for all his actions during the conflict.

The ill health defense

Belgrade B-92 radio reports that one of Mladic's arms is paralyzed, likely the result of a stroke. Milos Saljic, Mladic's lawyer, says that initial questioning in the case was cut short

because of the defendant's poor physical state. Deputy war crimes prosecutor Bruno Vekarić admits that Mladic is taking quite large amounts of medicine, but indicates that he "responds very rationally to everything." Some might question Mladic's rationality after his first two appearances in court. Stalling tactics and outbursts, however, will probably not help Mladic much. In their experiences with other defendants, like Slobodan Milosevic (former president of Yugoslavia) and Radovan Karadzic (the civilian leader of the Bosnian Serbs), prosecutors have learned not to tolerate delays and courtroom meltdowns. Milosevic's trial dragged out so long that he died before a verdict could be pronounced. Karadzic faced the possibility of being brought to court in handcuffs if he failed to appear and continued to flout the authority of the tribunal. There has even been speculation that Mladic and Karadzic will be tried together for their alleged dual role in the Srebrenica incident.

The end of impunity

World leaders and UN officials seem pleased that the trials of Mladic and Karadzic are progressing steadily. Commenting on the arrest and arraignment of Mladic, Richard Goldstone (the prosecutor in the original 1995 indictment of the Bosnian Serb military leader in absentia) says, "Impunity has really been withdrawn from war criminals. It's a very different world, and the prospects of them standing trial one day have been heightened considerably." Others hope that Mladic's arrest and the continued work of the tribunal will show individuals like Muammar Qaddafi of Libya that war criminals cannot elude justice forever.

Serbian President Boris Tadic is also extremely enthusiastic about Mladic's arrest and extradition. He says, "We have



Surrounded by pictures of the victims, Bosnian women watch Mladic's trial.

ended a difficult period of our history and removed the stain from the face of Serbia and the members of our nation wherever they live." Many in the Serbian government hope that their actions have helped to ensure European Union (EU) membership. Stefan Fuele, EU Enlargement Commissioner, admits that Serbia is closer to the EU after the arrest, but stresses that other conditions need to be met before Serbia can become a full EU member. To continue their move toward the European mainstream, Serbia would need to apprehend its last remaining war crimes fugitive – Goran Hadzic (leader of the Serbs in Croatia). The country would also need to introduce new regulations in every economic sector.

Hopefully, membership in the EU will heal some of the rifts between the Netherlands and Serbia (see sidebar) and build cohesion among the nations of South Eastern Europe as well. Before that, however, the most-wanted war crimes suspect, Ratko Mladic, must face long overdue justice.

Harold Alkema is a student of public policy at Carleton University. He lives in Ottawa with his wife, Heather.



The Dutch connection

For 16 years, the Netherlands has alleged that Serbia was actively harboring Mladic. The Dutch were some of Serbia's harshest critics and among the leading opponents of Serbia's EU membership bid. It was Dutch peacekeepers that failed to defend civilians in Srebrenica, an area that was supposed to be a UN safe zone in 1995. The second cabinet of then Prime Minister Wim Kok resigned over a report, published in 2002, that highlighted the failures of the Dutch UN mission.

News

Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

60 is 60



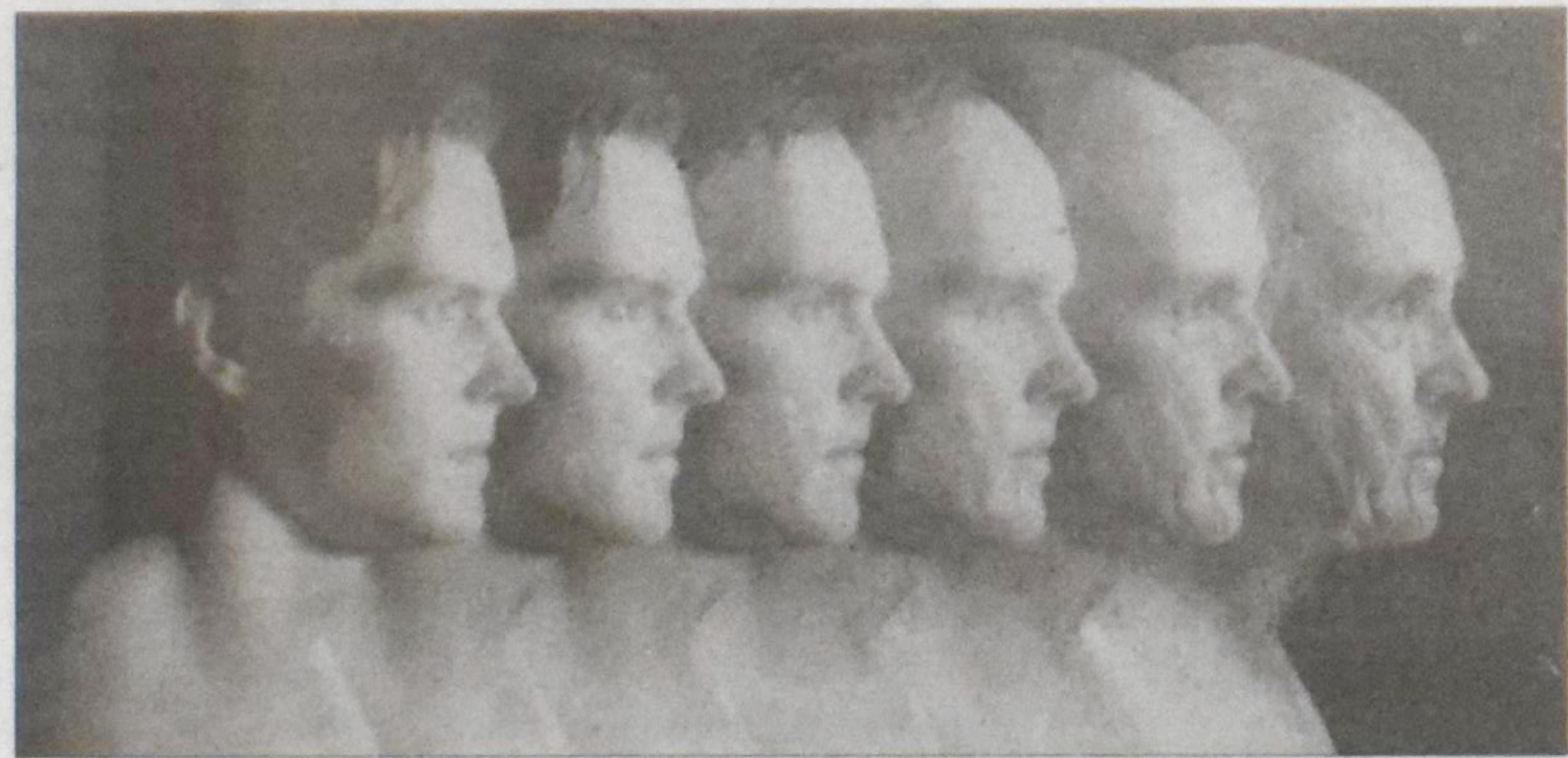
It was a hot summer day, and I was at that age when boys begin to leave their childhood behind and slowly enter a dense fog of hormones that sticks around for decades. My best friend was Brian. I would go to his farm on Sunday afternoons and play. We'd build huge, amazing forts in his hayloft – spending hours slinging bales, sweating up a storm, and setting the stage for pretend battles that would last only a few minutes.

As we got a bit older, we'd play less and talk more, waxing philosophical. We were only about 12, but we were feeling the effects of time, working away at us.

That particular hot afternoon, Brian brought up the subject of deodorant. He said: "Isn't it weird that as you get older, how much time you spend hiding the way you really smell and look from other people? I wonder how much money we spend on deodorant, toothpaste, acne medication, shampoo and that kind of stuff as we get older?"

Today, thanks to the Internet, we know that the average Canadian man spends about \$500 to \$600 per year in personal-care products. What Brian and I didn't realize was that covering up the signs of age gets more expensive as you age. Even for men.

In their teens, boys start shaving. And, unless you want to look like the guys from ZZ Top, that ritual never ends. In your 20s and 30s you might begin to use skin moisturizer to keep the wrinkles away. In your 40s, to help your failing eyes, you may need to get glasses or contacts. In your 50s or 60s, YOU MIGHT FIND THAT PEOPLE ARE SHOUTING AT YOU! Friend, trust me: that doesn't mean the world is getting quieter. It means it's time to shell out a few hundred bucks for a hearing aid.



Then, there's hair colouring. More and more men use it these days. Let's not forget all the pharmaceutical help you can get to feel younger: glucosamine tablets for your joints, anti-inflammatory pills for sore muscles, vitamins, ointments, salves and those heavily advertised little blue pills, too. And I won't even get into the surgical procedures that are available to pull loose skin tight, flatten wrinkles and vacuum away fat. There's no end to the products available – or the money you can spend – to look younger. And there's a reason people spend all that money: it works.

I look younger at 43 than my dad did. It's a fact. Not just because his hair was totally white and mine isn't – yet. Not just because he was a smoker and I moisturize and use sunscreen. And not just because

he wore suits and I like to dress youthfully and casually. I look younger than my dad at the same age because I cover up my age. But it's all an illusion. I can take a few years off my apparent age, but my real age doesn't change.

As Lewis Black put it: "People say 60 isn't old. They say 60 is the new 40. That's nonsense. Sixty is 60. Forty is 40. That's why they're different numbers!"

Still, we like to fool ourselves into thinking we're younger than we are. We like it so much, we spend \$88 billion a year in the US alone on anti-aging products. But if you think about it, our attempts to hold back time and live in a permanent present don't end with our own bodies.

The permanent present

When I was a kid, we had the same TV for 20 years. We had the same couch for 30 years. And we had the same pea-green dining room curtains for what seemed like forever.

Our house was filled with things that had the weight of time and history and nostalgia to them.

I don't live that way now. Almost nothing in my house – with the exception of my books, my dad's desk and an embarrassing number of things in my closet – is older than 10 years. When things get old, I replace them. My world and I are always new.

The other day in church it hit me: the desire to live in the permanent present – to stay young, and surrounded by new things – probably has something to do with declining church attendance.

After all, people come to church – in part, anyway – because they want to know more about eternal life. But if you already live in a world that gives you the illusion of eternal youth... what do you need a spiritual life for? It's much easier to simply avoid the question.

The Bible doesn't do that. It takes on the issue of mortality, head-on. As we read in Matthew, "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?... Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

We live in a world consumed with adding hours to our lives and subtracting years from our appearance. But all the deodorant, dye, botox and new home decor in the world can't change the fact that 60 has always been 60, and always will be.

We spend our lives pretending life isn't a terminal condition. Naturally, we want to avoid scripture – which has a lot to say about the matter. And avoid church – which is where people gather to think together about life, death and eternity.

But that's tragic. Living in a permanent present robs us of the greatest gift old age has to give us: the wisdom that comes from perspective. We're trying hard to remain young and foolish forever. Unfortunately, we're only getting it half right. ✂

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China's Three Gorges project: A huge dam with big troubles

Peter Ford

XIANGJIANDIAN, China (CSM) – At first sight, the view from Xiang Yue's house is idyllic: Her windows look out across the blue-green waters of the Yangtze River to mountainsides clad in groves of orange trees.

To Mrs. Xiang's eyes, though, the landscape is full of hidden dangers, and the landslides that scar the hillsides are constant reminders of the threat to her home, 40 miles upstream from the Three Gorges Dam. "The house is solid, but we can't control the soil underneath," she says.

Xiang is one of 1.3 million people who were forced to move when the reservoir behind the Three Gorges Dam, a showpiece of Chinese engineering, flooded their old homes and land. Now, like hundreds of thousands of other farmers who were relocated to higher ground, she will have to move again, a victim of potentially disastrous environmental problems that the dam has caused.

For years the Chinese government refused to acknowledge any dark side to its proudest engineering feat, the largest hydropower project in the world that is also designed to prevent the sort of catastrophic floods that have stricken millions of farmers in the Yangtze Basin for millennia. Begun in 1994, it opened in 2008.

Two months ago, however, the State Council, China's cabinet, recognized that the dam had caused "urgent problems... regarding the smooth relocation of residents, ecological protection, and geological disaster prevention."



The authorities have begun to plant grass along the reservoir's banks to try to reduce water seepage and soil erosion, and they have plastered vulnerable mountainsides with steel-mesh-reinforced concrete. They have posted landslide warning signs in especially dangerous spots.

Repair work, including a second round of resettlement, will likely cost \$15 billion, half as much as the dam itself cost to build. But there is little sign yet here of any government action to help the hundreds of thousands of forcibly relocated farmers struggling to make a living on the small plots of poor, mountainous land they were assigned above the 400-mile-long reservoir.

Lack of good land

"Down below, I used to harvest 20,000 pounds of oranges on my six *mu* [approximately one acre] of land," recalls Xiang. "Now I have only three *mu*, and the land is poorer, so I cannot grow more than 5,000 pounds a year." As with most of the adult men in the village, her husband has left home in search of work as a migrant laborer to make up some of the family's lost income. ✂

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Editorials

Commerce dressed up as compassion



Angela Reitsma Bick

We recently visited Discovery Church in Bowmanville, Ontario, a church plant of the older Rehoboth CRC. During the offering, people pulled out not only wallets but also cell phones from their pockets. A number flashed on the screen to direct text message donations to the right spot.

"Does this work?" I leaned over to ask my brother-in-law. He nodded, busy putting his own phone on vibrate – "to make sure we don't hear any donation email notices." He's the church treasurer.

For convenience, it's hard to beat that system. You might wonder how effective or meaningful it is to send five dollars via a text donation overseas, but in this case donors are engaged. Their actions are in context. I thought it was neat.

Still, I began to consider the proliferation of possible aid transactions these days. Ten percent of *this* swimsuit purchase will fund breast cancer research. *This* brand of coffee costs five times more, but workers were paid fair wages on the production end. Add a dollar to your total *here* and it will help relief efforts in Japan.

Two European professors call this growing trend "causerism" – shopping for a better world. In their book *Brand Aid*, Lisa Ann Richey and Stefano Ponte focus on the success of the brand RED since 2006 as the epitome of causerism, or consumption for a cause. Companies such as Microsoft, Starbucks, Apple, Armani, the Gap and Hallmark sell RED-branded products, and a percentage of their profits are used by the Global Fund to provide treatment to Africans living with AIDS. Buy Armani and be a "good-looking Samaritan" (as one video promises); wear a RED Gap T-shirt and echo Oprah, who calls it "the most important T-shirt I've ever worn in my life." It seems like a workable solution to the decades-long debate over international aid: either there's not enough (better raise more) or it's not getting to the right people (better stop giving). Maybe "just capitalism," as this book calls it, is the solution: business that makes the buyer feel good and saves the world at the same time.

We all have to buy things, right? Why not support a good cause while you're at it?

Doing good, buying goods

There's only one problem. Well, actually, a whole handful of problems, as Richey and Ponte outline in *Brand Aid*. First, as the title suggests, providing anti-AIDS medication is a typical band-aid solution (dressed in fancy new clothes); it does nothing to strengthen African health care systems or examine the root of the problem. It sets up individuals with buying power rather than governments as the agents of change.

Second, purchasing a RED product doesn't teach me anything meaningful about AIDS in Africa, despite the campaign's claim that it raises awareness of the issue. Instead, RED's marketing techniques sell the difference between "us" and "them," relying on stereotypes of the Western saviour (consumer) and the African with AIDS (sufferer, safely far away) (55). Worse, sexy white supermodels "stand in" for the bodies of African women "dying from sex" (79). Bono, RED's driving force, says he's "bringing sex appeal to the desire to change the world," but is that the best approach for a disease made worse by promiscuity?

It didn't take long, after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, for celebrities to rally around a new cause – Japan – using the same model to attract donors as RED. Famous faces, such as Gwyneth Paltrow's, urge us to buy celebrity designed shirts to "save Japan." It seems like a clever way to fight donor fatigue when the number of natural disasters threatens to overwhelm. But what does that transaction accomplish? I get a warm, fuzzy feeling and a new shirt, and an unspecified amount of money goes to the Japanese Red Cross. This campaign, like RED's, borrows the language of the fair-trade movement but has none of its carefully established regulations. Under what conditions was that shirt made? Does the earthquake survivor deserve more compassion than a sweat-shop worker?

The Lazarus effect

There are no easy answers to the complexity of international aid. And that's precisely the point – no single concert ticket or latte or cell phone holds the magical solution. We can't buy our way to a better world. That's one reason why, as Rob Jousstra writes in a *Comment* article, he wishes his international development classes had more business and law majors: "We have awareness. We have emergency response. We have stories and passion," he says. "We need strategy. We need implementation. We need law and justice, capital and foreign investment" (April 12, 2010).

Donating to church via text message when you're sitting in that church is one thing; swiping your credit card to get a high-end product and a pat on the back for your contribution is another. The latter divorces meaning from action and comes with a whole host of troublesome assumptions. One final example: A YouTube video in the RED campaign shows the effects of anti-retroviral drugs on four Africans: after sixty days, they are transformed from skeletal to robust.

"We call it the Lazarus Effect," the voiceover says. Medication has rescued them from death and – by buying RED products, of course – you can step in as the next saviour. The appeal of these campaigns is clear, but they miss a crucial point. None of us can purchase salvation, either from death or from sin. Only one person can truly save the world, and he doesn't operate through Starbucks. ✕

Angela Reitsma Bick is Editor of Christian Courier. She lives in Barrie with her family.

The DNA says evolution; What about the Church?



John Suk

My daughter-in-law Gillian, a student at Columbia Medical School in New York City, recently graduated from Syracuse University with a PhD in Biochemistry. I'm proud of her achievements. Her dissertation is entitled "High Throughput Screening of Aptamers." Gillian has developed and patented a new process for sequencing DNA that is much faster than older methods. Her research will aid in the development of new drugs, and interestingly, the speedy detection of cryptosporidium in our water. Cryptosporidium is a pathogen that is responsible for one of the most common waterborne – and sometimes fatal – diseases in the world.

I understand the basic thrust of her research because I've long been interested in both how evolution works and especially how DNA analysis sheds new light on the evolutionary history of our species. The theory of human evolution has always been based on independent and converging lines of evidence from many fields, such as archeology and biology. Modern DNA analysis that shows how different groups of people are related through time by comparing minute mutations in their DNA is just the most recent line of such evidence.

Christians often struggle to integrate new evolutionary science into their ancient faith. We have options. One is to argue that evolutionary science must be wrong because the story of Adam's creation out of the soil is an exact description of what happened. On this approach, genetic similarity between us and other species, such as Neanderthals or lemurs or fish is a red herring that God threw into the DNA – maybe for fun, or maybe to test our faith in the literalist interpretation of Genesis.

This approach is unacceptable for many reasons. At heart, it makes God's revelation of himself in the book of creation intentionally duplicitous. We gladly make use of our new understanding of the science of DNA to identify genetic diseases or for forensic analysis of trace amounts of DNA to identify people (usually criminals). Gillian has moved from a PhD in biochemistry to medical school because the scientific research in both places is completely interdependent. It is high irony that many of us are glad to take advantage of new medical advances when it comes to our health but reject the same science if it challenges our theology. I liken it to sailing around the world while continuing to insist that it is flat.

A more helpful approach would be to accept that contemporary science is forcing us to rethink traditional interpretations of the Bible. Of course, this has happened many times before. No one believes the earth is flat, that the universe revolves around the earth, or that there are waters above and below the earth.

We do have a lot of theology to rethink. For starters, a doctrine of original sin can't be based on a historical fall by an original human person. Calvin professors Daniel Harlow and John Schneider have done a wonderful job of getting a discussion about what we need to rethink restarted for Christian Reformed people.

In the meantime, though, I often think about my daughter-in-law Gillian. Telling her to reject human evolution from other, prior species would basically require her to discount the very science on which she bases her daily research, her patents, and her contributions to defeating the scourge of cryptosporidium. Gillian is a person of faith. She loves

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We acknowledge the assistance of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

Canada

News/Letters

Passé-proof dogma

I can't resist but entering into the discussion between Prof. Eikelboom and Ray Stellingwerff. Speculations and quests for greater understanding into our origins continue through the ages, sometimes yielding new insights, sometimes not. Any literary analysis of the first chapters of Genesis, however, will always point to the four most important words of the book, namely, "In the beginning God. . . ." That dogma is never out of date.

What remains also unchanged is the fact that sin somehow entered the very good creation and touched everything. Any analysis of human culture and behavior clearly displays this condition, a condition that only increases unless reversed by grace. In the book of Genesis check out the repeated words "But God. . . ." Thankfully God's intervention of grace is a reality not only central to the Bible's theme, but also something verifiable in human experience. That too is both a dogma and a reality that is never out of date.

Recently I've listened to a lecture/sermon series on Genesis 1-11 by the amazingly brilliant Darrel Johnson, lecturer at Regent

College. Relying on the best of biblical scholarship and scientific study, Johnson rises above both the common rationalism and the simple fundamentalism of the last 200 or so years. His results resonate with irresistible grace and undeniable truth. He begins with the question: "Why did God inspire and preserve this ancient text through all these years?" He concludes that in Genesis 1-11 God connects with, contradicts and corrects our theories, both those of the ancients and of our world today. Genesis 1-11 is revealed to be the story that makes sense of all of our stories. While Genesis 1-11 answers the question of why the world is as it is, it leads into Genesis 12 - Revelation 22 which answers the question: "What is God doing about it." Without this framework neither the Bible nor the world makes much sense.

For anyone seeking fresh treatment on the subject of origins and the Bible's account, I cannot recommend this series strongly enough. It's available at the Regent College Bookstore, UBC, Vancouver, or downloadable from their website.

Peter Stellingwerff
Salmon Arm, BC

Trampling our neighbours' fields

John Hiemstra's timely editorial, *Playing dice with the planet* (CC July 25), was right on. It made me wonder how much we Christians in the affluent West are buying in to today's world of post-modern consumerism, to the point that we seem to act in the same way in relation to the rest of the world as the Old Testament leaders of Israel did to the poor as described in Ezekiel 34.

Then, the leaders and the powerful seem to have consumed the choice of the land's resources and spoiled what was left. Have we spoiled the world's ecosystem to the point that catastrophic events happen to people in other parts of the world? If so, then – although I am not anointed as priest or king in Old Testament Israel – God's stern disfavour still bears down on me as a member participant of the Christian community in the West, as expressed in Ezekiel 34:17-19: "As for you my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you trample the rest of the pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?"

Dirk Velthuisen
Brampton, Ontario

Interested in writing?

Christian Courier is looking for a new columnist to contribute one 750-word article per month in the area of family life/parenting. Interested and experienced writers should send two sample articles to editor@christiancourier.ca by September 30. Content should reflect the principles of God's sovereignty and our mandate to interact with and reform culture. View some of our current columnists at christiancourier.ca.

Next issue: winners of the 2011 Adult Short Story contest



The DNA continued

going to church. But she won't go to one where she has to check her science vocation at the door and enter into a pretend alternate reality. Why should she, or any of our children, have to make such a sacrifice?

The time is ripe for us to put this evolutionary tempest in a Fundamentalist teapot behind us, and get on with the adventure of working out a theology that is a better reflection of both the book of scripture and the book of nature. ✂

Further reading

I'm often asked what books I'd recommend to those who are curious about human evolution. Here are three that I would highly recommend. Jerry Coyne's *Why Evolution Is True* is a very accessible introduction that is sensitive to traditional Christian concerns. Francisco Ayala is a former Dominican priest, and his *Am I a Monkey?* is a very spiritually mature reflection on evolution. If you're looking for a rollicking good read, I suggest Neil Shubin's entertaining *Your Inner Fish*.

– John Suk

John Suk is pastor of Grace Christian Reformed Church in Cobourg, Ontario. He has also served as editor of *The Banner*, Professor of Theology at Asian Theological Seminary and President of the Institute for Christian Studies.

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Address all correspondence to: 5 Joanna Dr, St. Catharines ON L2N 1V1

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News

British judge: Divorce is easier than getting a driver's licence

LONDON (TCI) – Divorce has become a “form-filling exercise” which is easier than getting a driver's licence, a British senior family judge said recently.

Sir Paul Coleridge criticized the “cultural revolution in sexual morality and sexual behaviour” and warned that a divorce can go through in just six weeks. The problem is “huge,” he added. Family breakdown now affects everyone in the country, “from the Royal Family downwards.”



Coleridge has previously said that drug addiction, binge drinking and bad behaviour in schools are contributing to the “meltdown” of the family.

Coleridge also

noted that the stigma attached to divorce has disappeared. He said it seems the numbers of children being affected by family breakdown is going up. “The whole of society is affected by this.... It affects the lives of children themselves, it affects the lives of their parents. The wider family gets caught up in it. It then ripples out to the local community, the schools and then into the wider community.”

The Centre for Social Justice think-tank has put the financial cost of family breakdown at between £20-24 billion per year (\$13-16 billion Cdn).

But in November 2010, Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith indicated that the actual cost to society could be up to £100 billion when a range of factors such as crime and lost productivity are taken into account. ➤

Russia: Orthodox Church opposes becoming the state church

MOSCOW (Interfax) – A spokesperson for the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church has announced that the patriarchate opposes efforts to name Russian Orthodoxy the state church and Russian Orthodoxy the state religion.

“We do not want to become part of the state apparatus, state machinery, to assume secular functions,” said Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin, who leads the Synodal Department for Church and Society Relations. Relations between the church and state should be invariable, said the archpriest.

He was commenting on a poll of 1,500 people across 44 Russian regions, 100 towns and villages. Conducted by the Sreda agency and the Public Opinion Foundation, the poll revealed that 30 percent of Russians want Orthodoxy to become the state church, 48 percent are against it and 23 percent did not have an opinion about it.

The system of church-state relations in Russia has not changed over the past decade, either from the point of view of secular laws or the Church's decisions, Chaplin said.

He concluded, “The fact that the church is growing and becoming more active by no means implies a review in its position on relations between the state and religion.” The Church is not, and is not trying to be, a substitute for the state, or to form some politicized ideology, Chaplin added. ➤



Archpriest Vsevolod Chaplin.

U.S.: Rights group sues innkeepers for not hosting lesbian wedding

LYNDONVILLE, Vermont (CCO) – The Vermont chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has sued a Vermont inn whose owners declined to host a lesbian wedding reception. The Associated Press describes Jim and Mary O'Reilly, who own the Wildflower Inn in Lyndonville, as “devout Catholics.”

“We have never refused rooms or dining or employment to gays or lesbians,” the O'Reillys said in a statement. “Many of our guests have been same-sex couples. We welcome and treat all people with respect and dignity. We do not however, feel that we can offer our personal services wholeheartedly to celebrate the marriage between same-sex couples because it goes against everything that we as Catholics believe in.”

Some states that have passed gay marriage laws have included “conscience clauses” in those laws for those whose faith does not condone gay marriage. But almost all such clauses refer to clergy only. Vermont's law was passed on Sept. 1, 2009. ➤



Christian groups combine to issue evangelism 'rules'

Marian Van Til

GENEVA, Switzerland – Evangelical, Mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic leaders convened earlier this summer in Geneva to announce the release of a document on the ethics of Christian evangelism. The document is being described as “historic” and is the culmination of five years of joint work by a wide range of theologians and Christian leaders.

“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct” is the first document to receive unanimous endorsement from three major Christian bodies, The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) EA, the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (WCC).

The document states that its intent is to “encourage churches, church councils, and mission agencies to reflect on their current practices... for their witness and mission among those of different religions and among those who do not profess any particular religion.”

Reducing tensions?

Jean-Louis Tauran, president of the PCID, said the recommendations “will help us reduce unnecessary tensions and present the truth of God in a credible way to the world around us,” reported *Christianity Today*. And WEA general secretary Geoff Tunnicliffe said the document “covers very succinctly the essence of Christian mission.”



Geoff Tunnicliffe

Admitting that the document doesn't really say anything new, Tunnicliffe said that, nevertheless it puts down very clearly, and in writing, the basis for collaboration “between three Christian families of faith” who represent “about 90 percent of all the Christians on the planet.”

Kevin Mannoia, professor of Ministry at Azusa Pacific University, a Christian university in California, told *Christianity Today* that evangelicals' participation in the collaboration “suggests” that they “are beginning to see their place as classic Christians in the broad scope of the Christian faith globally; we're seeing each other for who we are rather than who we're against.” Mannoia was president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) – of which the Christian Reformed Church is a member – from 1999 to 2001.

“I think the fact that the WEA is engaging with the WCC and the Catholic Church here indicates that they are becoming more willing to embrace interreligious dialogue,” Mannoia told CT. “On the other side, I think for the WCC and the Vatican to make the statement that witnessing is in the nature of the church marks a significant adjustment.” ➤

Indian churches launch hunger strike to protest treatment of Christian Dalits

Anto Akkara

BANGALORE, India (ENI) – Major churches in India are taking part in a hunger strike that began July 25 in New Delhi to demand an end to discrimination against Christian Dalits. “This strike is the expression of hunger for justice, hunger for equality and hunger for the human dignity of Christian Dalits,” said Rev. Roger Gaikwad, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in India at the launch of the protests.



Hunger strikers want discriminatory laws changed.

Dalit, which means “trampled upon,” refers to lower castes treated as untouchables in Indian society. Most eke out a living with menial jobs in rural areas while living in segregation from upper castes. Christian Dalits seek the “scheduled caste” recognition from the government accorded to other religions, such as Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists, that would allow them better access to education and jobs. Two-thirds of India's 27 million Christians are Dalits.

According to Gaikwad, four bishops and several Christian leaders joined Catholic archbishop Vincent Concessao of Delhi at the launch of the hunger strike, where hundreds of people sang hymns in different languages and shouted slogans. Half a dozen more bishops joined nearly one thousand Christians in the strike on the second day.

The National Council of Dalit Christians, a protest organizer, said in a statement that the government is withholding justice from Christians despite the fact several government commissions endorse their cause.

“We want the government to act on our decades-old demand,” said Fr. G. Cosmon Arokiaraj, executive secretary of the Dalit commission of the Catholic Church, another organizer. “The discrimination against us amounts to denial of the freedom of religion and equality guaranteed by the constitution,” said Arokiaraj, who is himself a Dalit.

More than 10,000 Christians, including several bishops and church officials from across the country, were expected to reach New Delhi for the concluding march to the parliament. ➤

News

CRWRC launches \$7 million response to East Africa drought

BURLINGTON, Ont. (CRCNA) – The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) announced today that it will drastically increase its response to severe drought in East Africa. Previously planning a \$4 million response, the agency now has a goal of distributing \$7 million in emergency aid between August and December 2011. The response will include food supplies, drinking water and fodder for livestock. This essential aid will help more than 100,000 Kenyans survive until the next harvest in January 2012.

“The situation in Somalia is dire. However, CRWRC is in an excellent position to avert a similar crisis occurring in Kenya,” says Wayne de Jong, CRWRC director for disaster response and rehabilitation. “We have already been delivering food aid to 3,500 vulnerable Kenyan families since April, and now that the need has expanded significantly we thank God that we are able to respond with and through our capable Kenyan Christian partner organizations to reach an additional 10,500 families [nearly 75,000 people] and help them and their livestock survive until the next harvest.”

According to a U.N. snapshot issued at the end of June, drought and famine relief needs in Kenya have now surpassed those in Somalia, with 3.5 million Kenyans requiring humanitarian assistance. CRWRC has been active in drought response in east-central and coastal Kenya regularly over the last decade, working through local church and community partners to assist farmer-herders and semi-nomadic herders and their families. From 2006 to 2010 CRWRC engaged in four emergency-food programs in Kenya that totaled almost \$7 million.

Averting a ‘major crisis’

“So far,” de Jong says, “there has been a fairly limited global humanitarian response to the current situation in Kenya. But a major crisis, as is already the case in Somalia, can still be averted in most areas if we respond quickly with aid. We are also planning to respond in southern Ethiopia.”

De Jong says that the next rainy season is a short, unpredictable one that will start in October. If the rains are good, a harvest in January 2012 will result. “However, there is no likelihood of improvement before then, and if these short rains fail, the need in Kenya will become even more serious.”

Sufficient rain this fall would reduce and stabilize food prices, increase food availability and restore the grazing land of herding communities across East Africa, de Jong



Women in East Africa carry away maize that came from CRWRC and Canada.



says. However, the area’s vulnerable poor have suffered most from chronic hunger and deprivation. Their ability to cope has degraded over time. “This year may be the worst yet,” he says, “with some areas of Kenya receiving only ten percent of the rainfall expected after a year – or several – of failed harvests.”

In addition to food aid and food-for-work projects such as water catchments, tree planting and growing grass to feed livestock, a CRWRC disaster risk reduction specialist is working within drought-affected communities to improve the likelihood of long-term survival. Risk-reduction projects will help communities assess their resources and develop strategies that will reduce the impact of drought.

CRWRC director Andrew Ryskamp says that the agency is “responding to the urgent needs of people in Kenya with food, while also helping them recognize their own potential for successfully combating chronic drought conditions in the future.”

CRWRC is soliciting both prayer and donations for this project. ➤

Churches aid refugees of Indonesian volcano eruption

JAKARTA, Indonesia (CNA) – Christian churches have moved quickly to help the more than 5,000 people who have fled the volcanic eruption of Mount Lokon last month on the northern Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

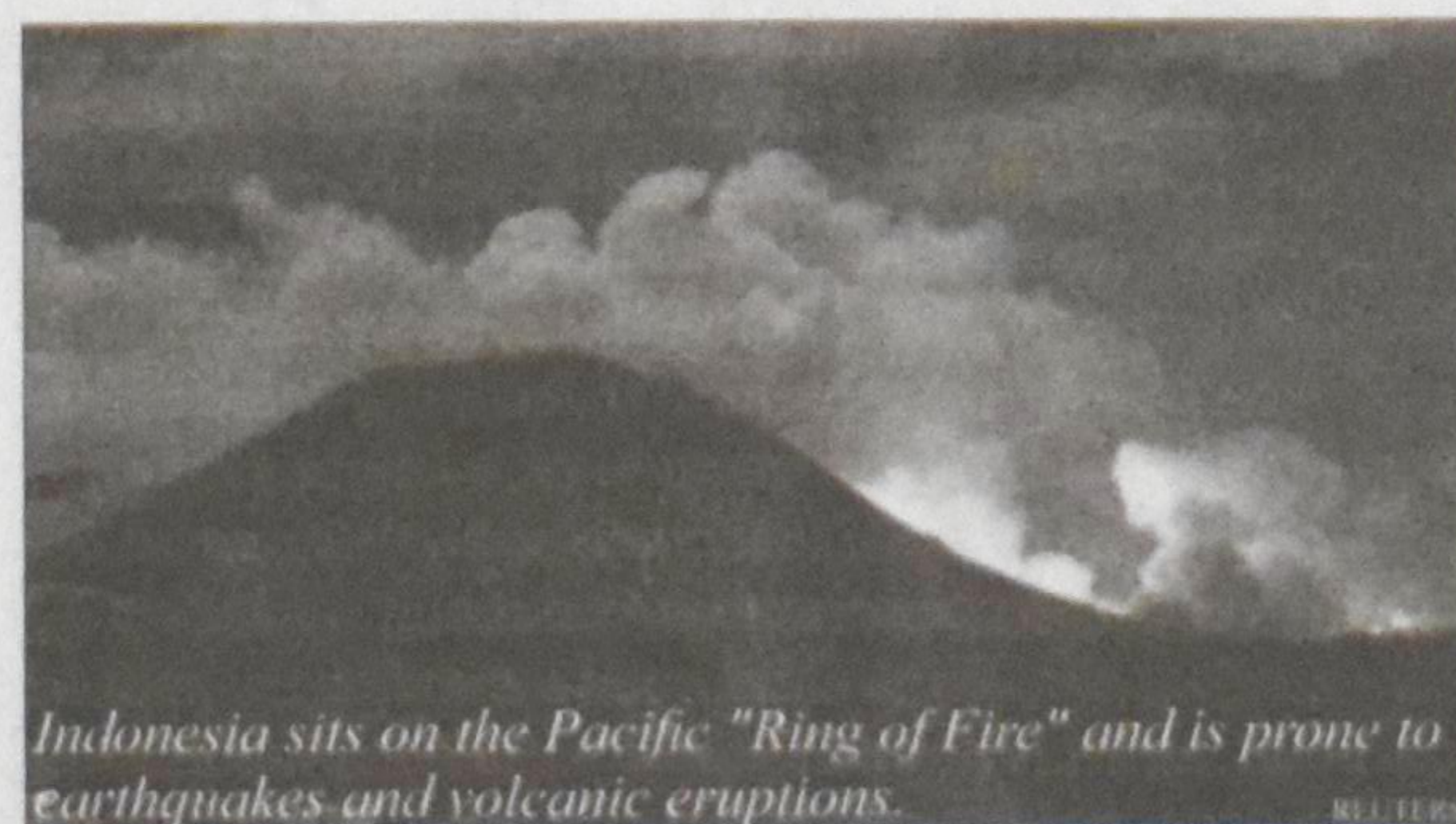
Christian schools and church halls in Tomohon and Manado have welcomed the refugees, while other displaced persons have taken refuge in public buildings like the University of Manado.

Even as the alert level remains high, Christian volunteers are working to distribute food. Christian schools have also begun an education service to allow children to continue their lessons, Fides news agency reports.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Manado’s development commission has voiced concern about the large number of displaced families, who are mostly Muslims. It has appealed to all Catholic parishes and organizations so that they provide “as much assistance as possible.”

Caritas Indonesia and the Indonesian Episcopal Conference are also assisting relief efforts.

The long-dormant volcano began rumbling on July 9. On



Indonesia sits on the Pacific “Ring of Fire” and is prone to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.

Sunday, July 18 an eruption shot soot and debris 11,400 feet into the sky. Another two blasts took place 10 minutes apart on July 18. The larger blast sent ash as high as 2,000 feet into the air. No injuries or damages from the blasts were reported, but one person died of a heart attack during the evacuation.

More than 33,000 people live on the volcano’s fertile slopes, where they grow cloves and coffee. Over 10,000 were evacuated. ➤

World must mobilize in aid of famine victims in Horn of Africa, urges Pope

ROME (VR) – Twice in two weeks Pope Benedict XVI launched an urgent appeal for the international community to immediately mobilize itself in aid of the tens of thousands of men, women and in particular the children, hit by famine in the Horn of Africa.



Speaking from the courtyard of his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo following midday prayers, Benedict said, “I am following with deep concern the news from the Horn of Africa, particularly Somalia, stricken by a severe drought and then, in some areas, even by heavy rains that are causing a humanitarian catastrophe.”

The Pope continued, “Countless people are fleeing from the famine in search of food and aid. I hope international mobilization grows to send timely relief to our brothers and sisters already sorely tried, among which there are so many children. May our solidarity and the concrete support to all people of good will not fail these suffering people.”

Fleeing the worst regional drought in six decades, some 400,000 people have left Somalia and other nations of East Africa for a refugee camp in Dadaab, Kenya. Thousands are now arriving every day at the camp, whose capacity is only 90,000.

“More than two million babies in the Horn of Africa are malnourished and need urgent assistance to save their lives,” reported *L’Osservatore Romano*. “A half a million of these babies are in imminent danger for survival, with long-term consequences for their physical and mental development. More generally, it is estimated that ten million people need immediate humanitarian assistance, more than double the number that UN agencies are currently able to assist.”

See accompanying story re: CRWRC aid. ➤

Australian convert to Islam whipped for drinking

SYDNEY, Australia (CCO) – An Australian man who had converted to Islam reports that he was whipped by fundamental Wahabi Muslims for drinking alcohol.

The Sydney man, who did not want his name released, said that several men broke into his apartment at night and lashed him with a cable, leaving his body covered with welts. He said that the attack was punishment for having gone drinking with friends.

He was asleep in his apartment when he awoke to find four bearded men at his bedside. Three of the men held him down while the fourth used the cable to administer 40 lashes. The attack lasted 30 minutes.

Some Muslims in Sydney condemned the attack. “This criminal act has no place in Islam. As Australian Muslims we are required to follow Australian law, not take the law into our own individual hands,” Ahmed Kilami, from the Muslim Village, told Australia’s Seven Network. “I hope these guys are caught and face the full force of the law.”

The beaten man says he has not changed his mind about his conversion to Islam. ➤

Columns

Technically Speaking

Derek Schuurman



Wanted: Christian engineering education in Canada



Christian colleges in Canada have traditionally offered degree programs in the arts, humanities and natural sciences, but not in applied sciences such as engineering. What is the point of teaching engineering in a Christian college? Is there a distinctive Christian approach to engineering in areas like automotive design, bridge building and power grids?

Many people assume that technology is neutral. The argument goes something like this: it isn't about the technology itself, it's what you *do* with technology that matters. This perspective leads to a philosophy of technology education in which the world of values is not part of the world of practical engineering. If this is true, then the case for a Christian engineering education is limited.

Questions like this are the focus of the annual Christian Engineering Education Conference (CEEC). This summer, the conference was held at Trinity Western University, and it

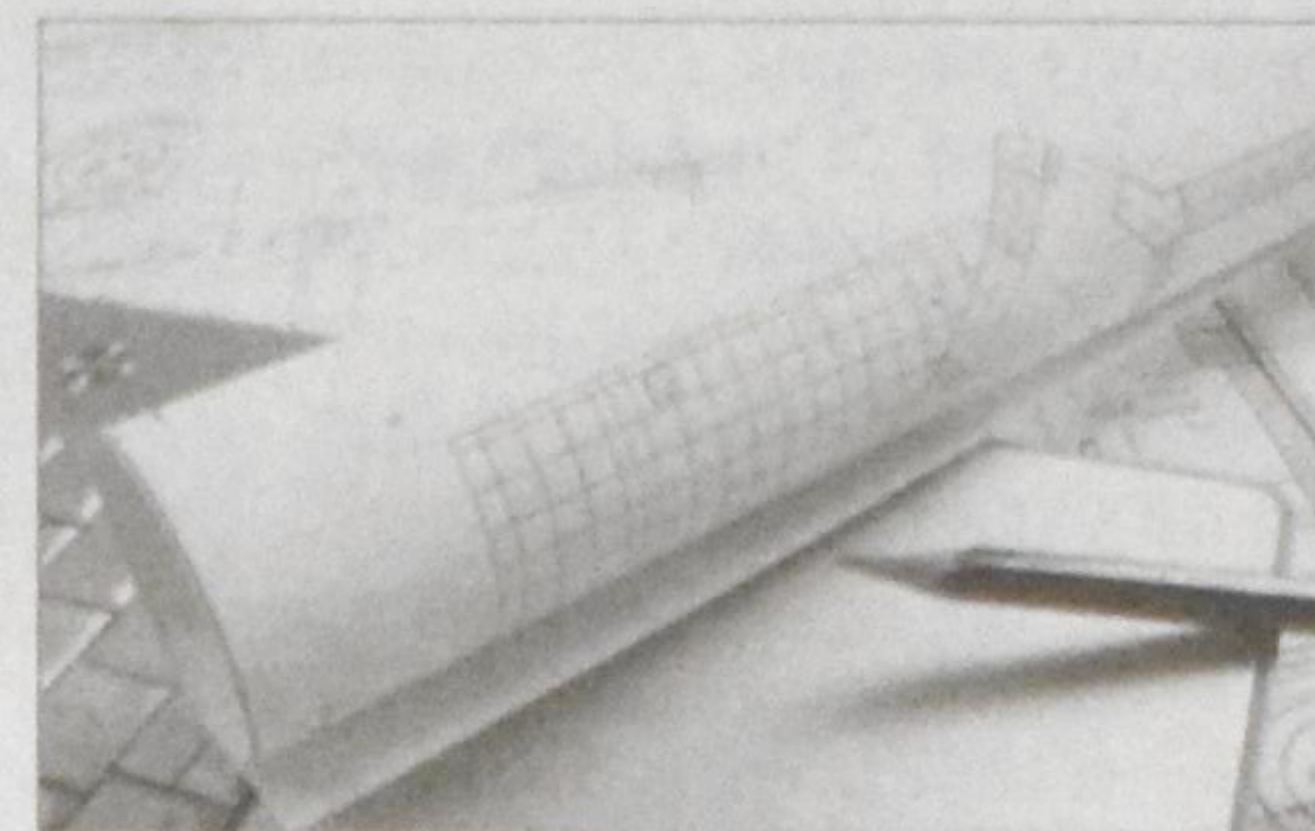
attracted dozens of engineering professors from a wide variety of Christian colleges across North America and South Korea. Together with Arnold Sikkema, a physics professor from Trinity Western University, I presented a paper entitled "Christian Engineering Education in Canada." This paper could have been very short, since there are no full engineering programs at any Canadian Christian colleges. Nonetheless, we sketched the rationale for a Christian engineering program and proceeded to share our dream of establishing such a program in Canada.

Creational norms

The rationale for Christian engineering programs begins with understanding the nature of technology. The book *Responsible Technology* defines technology like this: "A distinct cultural activity in which human beings exercise freedom and responsibility in response to God by forming

and transforming the natural creation, with the aid of tools and procedures, for practical ends or purposes."

This definition recognizes that technology is a *human cultural activity*; it is more than just machines and technical artifacts. When we do engineering, we are not just working with mechanical forces, chemical reactions or electric potentials. In our technical work there are other aspects at play –



things such as cultural appropriateness, open communication, etiquette, stewardship, user-friendliness, justice, care for public health and safety, and the trustworthiness and reliability of our work. These aspects are associated with certain norms in which we exercise freedom and responsibility. To avoid running amok, these norms ought to be shaped by Scripture and by seeking God's will for his creation.

Currently, only large publicly-funded universities offer degree programs in engineering in Canada. However, both Redeemer University College and Trinity Western University have recently begun attracting students with an interest in beginning their engineering studies at a Christian university. Both universities have now established pre-engineering programs in which students can begin their first year of studies at a Christian university before transferring to a public university. These pre-engineering programs provide an opportunity for students to develop their Christian worldview before pursuing further studies in engineering. Although there are established engineering programs at places like Calvin College and Dordt College in the U.S., Canadian students who attend these programs can face hurdles when applying for their professional engineering status in Canada. Furthermore, the Canadian culture and context is different than in the U.S.

Culture-shapers

Any effort to establish an accredited engineering program at a Christian university in Canada will face significant challenges. Establishing an engineering program requires specialized labs and equipment – an expensive proposition for Christian universities which face perennial issues of tight budgets and limited resources. Furthermore, it will be a challenge to attract qualified Christian faculty members, particularly when faculty salaries at Christian colleges are modest in comparison with typical industry salaries. Finally, any legitimate program will require recognition from the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) in a context without any existing Christian liberal arts engineering programs. Finally, prospective students will need to be convinced of such a program's quality and viability.

It sounds daunting, but Christian universities are used to such challenges. *Stepping Forward in Faith* and *On the Raw Edge of Faith* tell the pioneering stories of the birth of Redeemer College and Trinity Western College respectively, where seemingly insurmountable challenges were overcome by God's grace and providence. Christian colleges want to train Christians to be agents of change – culture-shapers. In an age of high-technology, perhaps it's time that an engineering program is established at a Christian college in Canada in order to train young men and women to be faithful and responsible engineers. ➤

Derek Schuurman (dschuur@cs.redeemer.ca) is a licensed engineer and a professor at Redeemer University College. This column summarizes a longer paper co-authored with Arnold Sikkema and presented at the Christian Engineering Education Conference.

Principalities & Powers

David Koyzis



Canada and Belgium



A recent family visit to Montreal coupled with the purchase of a six-pack of Stella Artois reminded me of some of the historical similarities between Canada and Belgium. The modern Kingdom of Belgium was created in 1830 out of

former Habsburg lands granted to the Netherlands after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Predominantly Catholic with a francophone elite, it functioned uneasily for a decade and a half under a protestant king, Willem I, and an assembly in which its people felt underrepresented. A popular revolt led to Belgian independence, with a new monarch imported from the German house of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, which would also supply Prince Albert to Great Britain and, of course, Canada.

Two vernacular languages were spoken by Belgians: the Flemish dialect of Dutch in the north by a slight majority of the people, and Walloon French in the south. Yet these two linguistic groups did not then regard themselves as distinct nations. Flemings did not look on their northern neighbours as ethnic brethren. Flemings were devoutly Catholic, as any visitor to Bruges/Brugge can see in the mediaeval city's ecclesiastical and even residential architecture. Educated Belgians from north and south alike spoke French and saw themselves having more in common with each other than with either France or the Netherlands.

Like the Netherlands during the 19th and into the 20th centuries, Belgium too was internally divided along religious and ideological lines. Here *trois familles spirituelles*, or three spiritual families, came into existence. These were the Catholics, liberals and socialists, each of which developed their own political parties, professional associations and fraternal organizations. Liberals and socialists were heirs of the French Revolution, while Catholics sought to defend the historic faith of ordinary Belgians against the onslaught of secularism.

Catholic Belgians even had their counterpart to Abraham Kuyper in the person of Fr. Adolf Daens (1839-1907), who struggled to apply Catholic social teachings to the social

ills of the country.

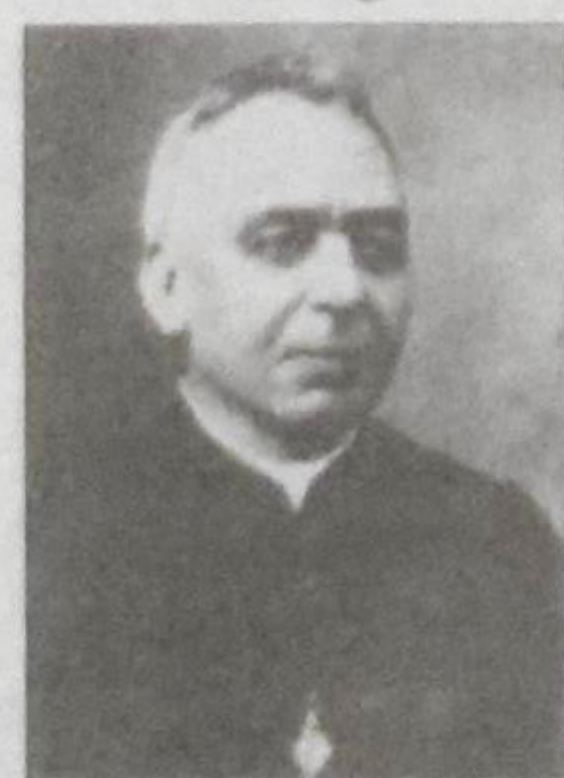
Yet after the Second World War, continued secularization shifted the internal cleavages in Belgian society from religious/ideological to linguistic. Since then Belgium has tried mightily to accommodate the divergent ethnic aspirations of Flemings and Walloons within an increasingly divided polity.

God keep our land . . .

Here in Canada we have had a similar experience. The line between Catholic and protestant Canada once ran along the Ottawa River. In the early 20th century such figures as Abbé Lionel Groulx (1878-1967) developed a seemingly strong French-Canadian nationalism revolving around the pre-eminence of the Roman Catholic Church. Even the young Pierre Trudeau initially followed this line of thinking. Similarly, Ontario was doggedly protestant, with the fraternal Orange Order dominating the politics and social activities of the province until after 1945.

With the secularization of Canada, the religious cleavage seemed to have lost its relevance. Yet the need for communal identity remained strong. Québec's Quiet Revolution effectively emptied the church pews and depressed that province's once high birth rate. The 1960s saw the beginnings of a post-Christian Québec nationalism, whose principal focus was now the French language, the devotion to which took on religious fervour. René Lévesque's Bill 101, the Charter of the French Language, upset the precarious balance between French and English in Québec, which Prime Minister Trudeau attempted, not altogether successfully, to subvert through his constitutional reforms. As in Belgium, language and ethnicity replaced the old religious divisions.

What is the lesson to be learnt in this comparative history? Primarily that, much as nature abhors a vacuum, so also does the spirit, as St. Augustine understood so well 16 centuries ago. The ethos of a nation is determined by the gods it worships. If we abandon faith in the one true God, we will inevitably place our faith in new false gods of our own choosing. Mere love of language or nation cannot suffice; our hearts will remain restless until they rest in the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ. ➤



Fr. Adolf Daens

David T. Koyzis (dkoyzis@redeemer.ca) is on a sabbatical leave from Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and is completing a book on authority, office and the image of God.

Reviews

Doctor Who, David, and the Statue of Dagon: a new breed of commentary

Steve Harris

Among the more interesting things going on in theology's ivory tower is a new movement toward "theological interpretation" of the Bible. Now, it might seem obvious that the Bible should be read and understood "theologically," that is, attempting to hear God speaking in it for the life of the Church. But in the academy of the last two hundred years, this has been anything but the case – the Bible has been read historically, literarily, rhetorically, socially and in other ways that take it as an old, old religious text. This new movement, on the other hand, wants to recover the sense that the Bible is the voice of God for the Church. The Brazos theological commentary series is a part of this.

Brazos has granted the commentators freedom in just how they go about reading their book "theologically." For example, theologian Stanley Hauerwas writes his *Matthew* commentary in this series to show how one should read the Bible as a disciple of Jesus, since discipleship is a key theme of that gospel. Murphy, writing on 1 Samuel, shows us how we should read biblical history as the outworking of God's providence – a key theme of this Old Testament book. This is beautifully put in how she connects David and the Messiah: "With the birth of Christ, David was not reinterpreted, but *became* something he had not been before, the ancestor of the world's redeemer" (162). In other words, reading the biblical histories means looking for *God's* activity in it – the "earthquake" that changes "the terrain" of the story (162).

This allows Murphy to both interact with scholars who are critical of the historicity of the stories in 1 Samuel and to provide sound criticisms of their results. As she writes, "A reader who takes the story theologically has better access to it than either a purely historical or purely literary reader. The theological reader can imagine the historicity of the drama" (115). Again and again, Murphy turns to the fact that *God* is behind these histories to resolve what appear as dilemmas to scholars who assume they are just squabbles between, for example, a power-hungry Samuel and Saul the "melodramatic victim" (108).

Instead, Murphy reads this history as a *real drama* with real human actors, free in their doings with one another and with God. In fact, she presents the whole of 1 Samuel as a TV series-like drama, dividing it into "seasons" and "episodes." She draws attention to the comic element in 1 Sam. 5, where the statue of Dagon is cracked apart by the ark of the covenant: "When the comedy is driven by God, then, a satirical bite is taken out of a pagan figure of fun" (42). But she also notices the deeply tragic elements in the drama, such as the "pathos of Saul's thrice-repeated pleas for mercy" (145) when the kingdom is taken from him in 1 Sam. 15. Her presentation of the story accentuates how the author writes more "like a graphic novelist" (251) than a modern historian – though this makes it no less historical. 1 Samuel, she suggests, would make a "good movie" (275).

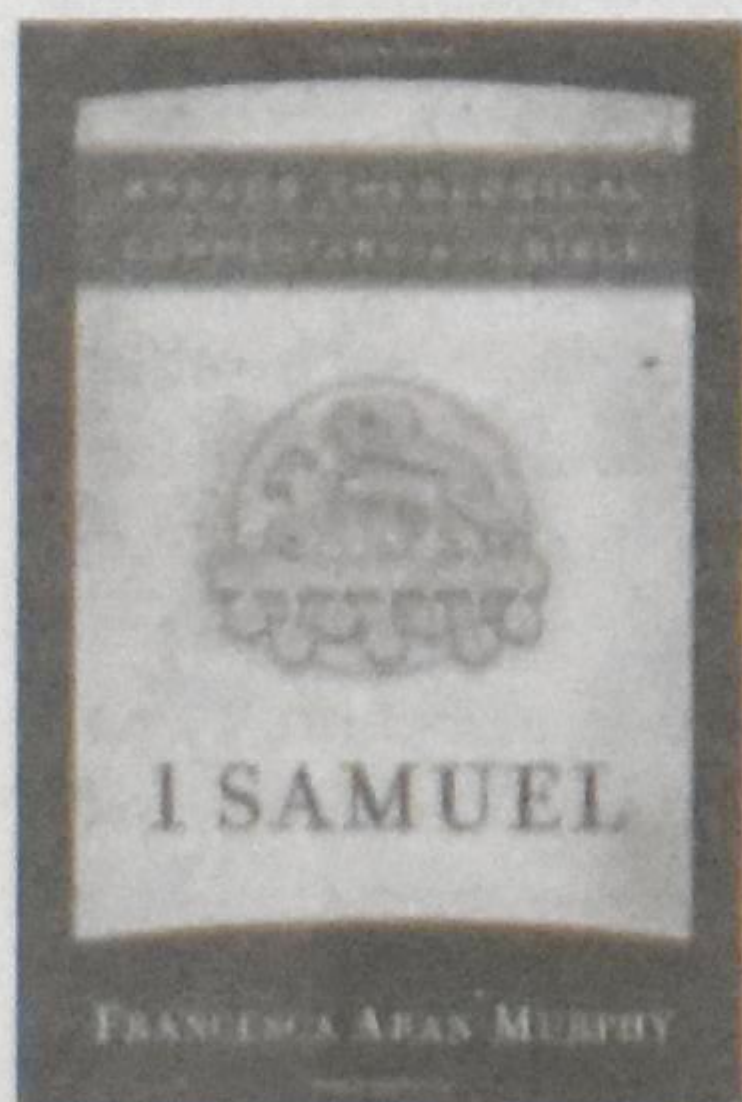
Yes, this is a uniquely captivating commentary. Add to the mix Murphy's sense for the aesthetic in her own writing, at times downright hilarious comments, and scattered references to *The Bourne Supremacy*, *Lord of the Rings* and the Daleks from *Doctor Who*. This, along with her wide appreciation of ancient Christian perspectives on 1 Samuel, also makes this a treasury of spiritual riches. To be clear, however, this is not a popular-level devotional commentary. One should note that Murphy writes at quite a high academic level – she is, after all, a professor of theology at Notre Dame – and may not be accessible to all readers. She spends pages on occasion amid the nitty-gritty of German scholarship on the various theories about 1 Samuel's composition and is conversant with the archaeological and historical research on the world of Israel in the tenth and eleventh centuries BC.

Yet what ensures that this does not swallow up the commentary is her persistent return to what *God* is doing with beleaguered Hannah, belittled Samuel, botched Saul and our beloved David. While probably restricted to pastors, students of theology and those willing to struggle through – or skip – the more abstruse parts of the text, Murphy has done the Church a great favour in bringing to light how the seemingly dusty history of 1 Samuel is "an edge-of-the-seat affair" (174). ➤

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Referencing the long-running British *Doctor Who*, Murphy likens Old Testament narrative to a television series.



1 Samuel: Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible by Francesca Aran Murphy. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010.



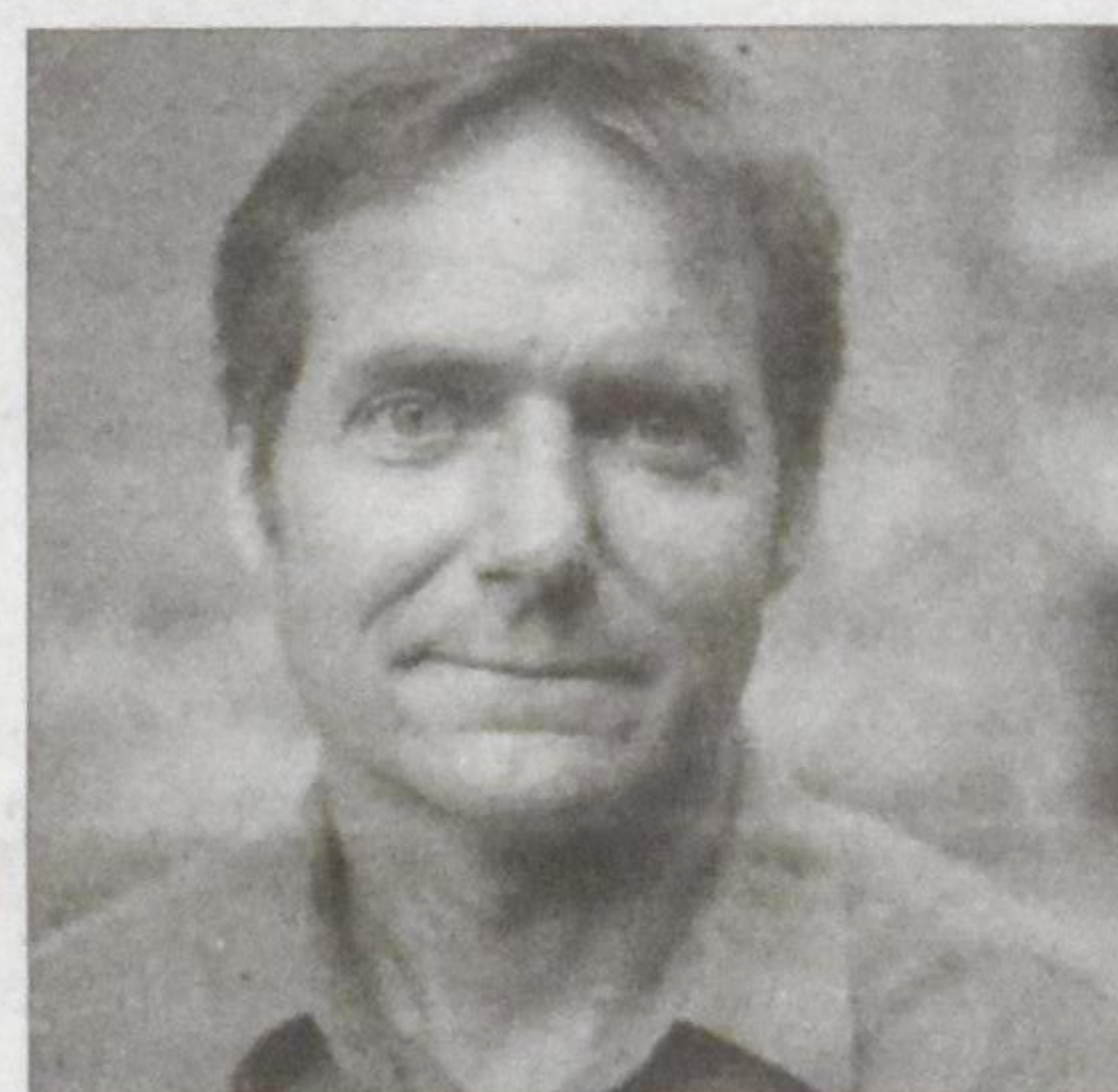
Memoir of captivity in Iraq: a thrilling and provocative account

Nick Schuurman

"Why do we pacifists think that our way – Jesus' way to peace will be less costly? Unless we . . . are ready to start to die by the thousands in dramatic vigorous new exploits for peace and justice, we should sadly confess that we really never meant what we said."

The words shook those who had gathered for the 1984 Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg France. The speech, delivered by theologian Ron Sider, led to another conference two years later, and eventually gave birth to Christian Peacemaker Teams. Decades later, Canadian peace activist James Loney traveled to Iraq, along with fellow Canadian Harmeet Singh Sooden, American Tom Fox, and British citizen, Norman Kember. The four were part of a CPT delegation sent to Iraq in late 2005 to gather information and participate in nonviolent conflict resolution. In November of that year, they were kidnapped by insurgents, and held for 118 days until being rescued by an elite British task force. *Captivity*, written by Loney, is the account of the events that took place during what came to be one of the most publicized kidnappings of the war in Iraq.

The book is, like their experience, at once thrilling, banal, and heartbreaking. Hopes rise and fall chapter by chapter, until, with the hostages themselves, the reader begins to doubt completely the possibility of escape or rescue. Hope, however, is thread through its pages – one deeper than the lies continually fed to them by their captors. Without sensationalizing or exploiting the story and its characters, Loney's prose powerfully pulls the reader forward through to the last pages.



"If we want to be free . . . we have to let go of the power of domination and reach for the power of loving and healing and forgiving," James Loney says (391).

In that small room, underfed, handcuffed and left in the filth of unchanged and unwashed clothes, Loney carries the reader along, describing, in surprisingly lucid detail, the months' events. A window is opened into how frayed and tense interactions become under such prolonged abuse, and how much the human spirit is able to withstand in conflict. There are points of intense joy, followed by incredible pain and anger – most notably that which accompanied the murder of Tom Fox.

The story was received by many as controversial both when it first broke and, when upon the captives' release, further details were made public. While opposition to the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq has existed since it began, to be part of such efforts of peace and protest has by no means been without criticism. Evangelicals were also surprised to learn of Loney's sexual orientation – a fact that was hidden from the media for the duration of the captivity, for fear of what the captors would do if they found out – and that one of the members of the team was in fact an adherent of the Sikh faith. Sensitivity to these tensions can still be felt as Loney, now years later, recalls his return to Canada.

While the book primarily tells the story of the months spent kidnapped, Loney is not shy about voicing the convictions that lead him to the heart of this conflict. While the story will be enjoyed and appreciated by a diverse readership, Loney makes it clear that he believes his faith compels him to resist armed conflict and imagine and practice nonviolent means of making peace. The book is in this regard appropriately subtitled, "118 Days in Iraq and the Struggle for a World Without War."

"Sleep Jonah in the belly of a paradox," reads the first line of Daniel Berrigan's poem "Whale to Jonah," which Jim's partner Dan read every night until their release, and which now prefaces the book.

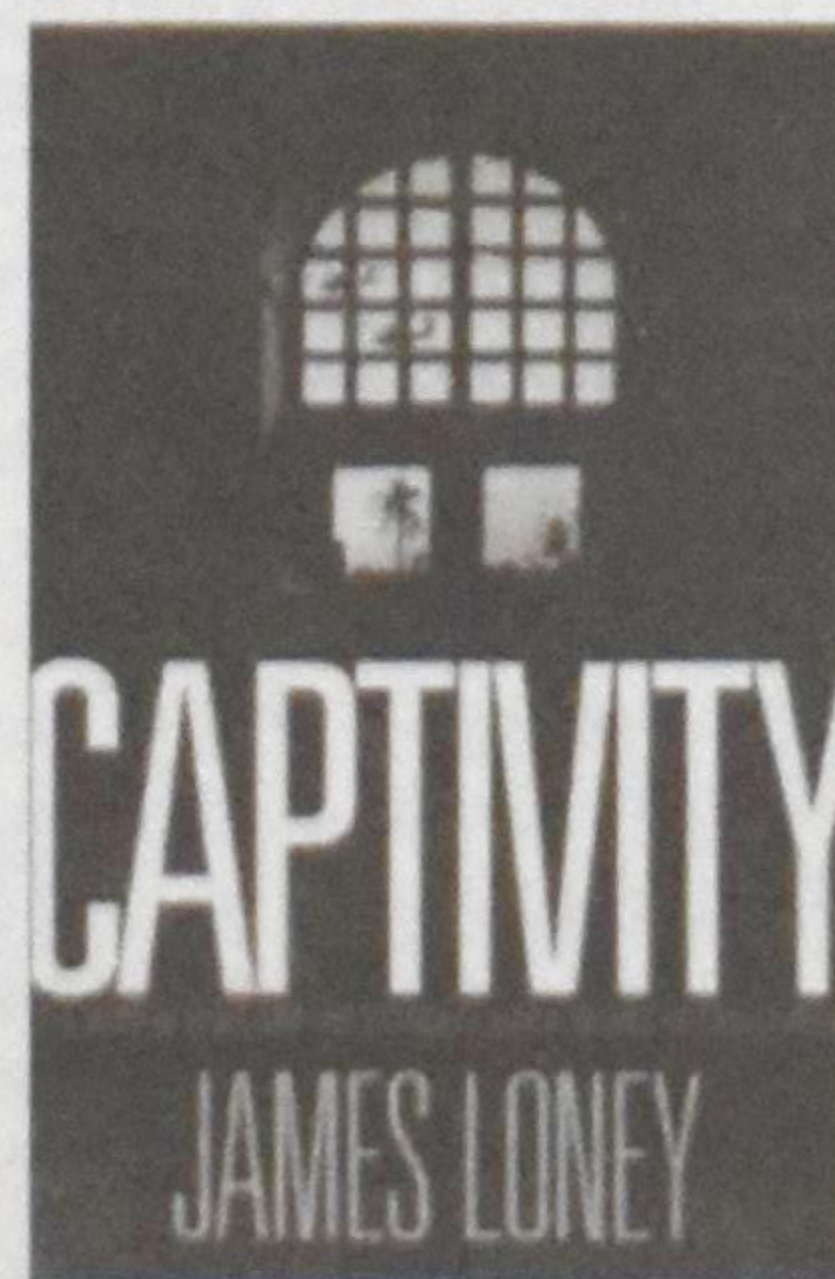
This is a story fraught with paradox and Loney admits the contradictions of the experience. How does one love their kidnappers as Christ taught, without slipping into Stockholm Syndrome? Why would they, having been presented with opportunities to escape, willingly choose to stay? And perhaps the most obvious: how does one show gratitude, having been rescued by members involved in the very military occupation they were protesting?

These questions, paradoxically, are the book's strength. Life is painfully and unavoidably complex, and to begin to work for justice in even the smallest way is to risk contradiction. This story gives flesh to the call to love and mercy in a complex and violent world, regardless of opinion regarding armed conflict. ➤

Captivity

by James Loney. Toronto, ON: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2011.

Nick Schuurman (schuurman.nick@gmail.com) is reviews editor for CC.



Features

Blanket Exercise...a meeting place

Cathy Smith

On March 27, 2011, a unique joint reconciliation effort took place in Sarnia, Ontario, sponsored by Redeemer Christian Reformed Church and St. Clair United Church of Aamjiwnaang First Nation, the oldest United Church congregation in Lambton County. At this "Blanket Exercise," Matthew Stevens, Métis leader and Christian pastor, shared positive words about change: "Don't be ashamed. Stay away from shame. Where's the hope? You are the hope. The fact that you will listen." The Blanket Exercise is an initiative promoted by Kairos, an ecumenical justice organization of which the CRCNA is a member (kairoscanada.org).

This past June 11th marked the third anniversary of Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools on behalf of Canada. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was instituted by the federal government to address the painful legacy of this abysmal chapter in Canadian history and to work towards improved relationships between First Nations peoples and other Canadians. In response to this national effort and in obedience to Christ's command to "love your neighbour as yourself," Redeemer CRC has taken its own small steps towards creating a space for friendship and dialogue between cultures.

Pastor Jim Poelman and his wife Linda of Redeemer CRC had previously fostered four native children in Smithers, B.C. Thea DeGroot, chair of Redeemer's Social Justice Committee, had worked as a literacy teacher on the Aamjiwnaang reserve, located within the boundaries of the city of Sarnia. Together with other church members, they embarked on a simple outreach... an invitation to their First Nation neighbours to get to know one another better. DeGroot explains, "The Blanket Exercise is a wonderful tool for creating structured listening for our collective story from an aboriginal perspective. The process started with a genuine effort to do more to honour National Aboriginal Day than a bulletin cover and insert. We already had some real contacts with members of Aamjiwnaang First Nation. We contacted the pastor and met with her and then decided to start by inviting members of Redeemer CRC to worship with members of St. Clair United in their worship space. This was a good first contact as one faith community to another. Then we offered Redeemer's membership the Blanket Exercise. We have no lofty goals of "fixing the aboriginal problem" and are not sure where this path will take us. We wish in these small ways to be reconcilers as Christ reconciled himself to us."

Hope in listening

Rev. Caroline Wilson Wynne, of St. Clair United Church, was in attendance at the Blanket Exercise as well as special guest, Elder Geraldine Robertson, a residential school survivor. Participants in the interactive session reviewed Canadian history from the perspective of the conquered indigenous population. They were also alerted to common misconceptions regarding First Nations people and their culture. A Talking Circle was held following the exercise, and those who wished to speak were given the opportunity to do so. Many CRC members expressed sorrow for past wrongs committed against aboriginal peoples. Others offered statements of encouragement and hope for a different future.

The CRCNA Office of Social Justice calls the Blanket Exercise a useful tool for creating awareness about aboriginal issues. Rev. Curtis Korver, pastor of Covenant CRC in Calgary, Alberta, and Chair of the Committee that oversees the Christian Reformed Center for Public Dialogue, says, "It helps participants understand why reconciliation is needed and how to take steps toward reconciliation and new relationships." The Blanket Exercise is slated to be held at

the next Classis Chatham meeting.

Further collaboration and relationship-building occurred when banners were created by members of Redeemer CRC, St. Clair United Church and High Park United Church to thank the Canadian government for finally signing the UN Declaration of Indigenous Rights and to urge political leaders to implement its recommendations. On June 20, 2011, the banners, along with others that were gathered from all over Canada, were presented on Parliament Hill.

Rev. Poelman, DeGroot and others are committed to keeping the dialogue alive. Plans are underway to create further opportunities for discussion about such topics as common perceptions of native peoples, issues of taxes and property ownership, and connections between native spirituality and Christianity. Several CRC individuals are partnering with Steve Vandehoef, the Justice and Rec-



Sending the banners off to Ottawa.



Pastor Matthew Stevens introduces the Blanket Exercise.

conciliation Mobilizer for Canadian Ministries (crcna.org), to launch an

art exhibit featuring a series of paintings called *Kisemanito Pakitinasuwin ~ The Creator's Sacrifice* by Métis artist Ovide Bighetty. ➤

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Refugee sponsorship:

A doorway to blessed multicultural relationships

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

(Please note that all names have been changed.)

When Mary turned one year old, her proud parents, Laurier and Desiree, invited guests to their apartment to celebrate this milestone in their second child's life. As the visitors, adults and children from various backgrounds – Rwandans, Sudanese, Americans and Canadians – arrived, hugs and greetings were exchanged between friends and handshakes between new ones. Gifts of food filled the table and presents for Mary piled up on the floor. The children cavorted through the apartment, from the living room to the bedrooms and back again, holding hands, dancing, shrieking, and laughing, while the adults talked and finished the preparations for the meal.

As I watched the energetic, festive scene, I was overcome by a sense of holy awe as I remembered the Book of Revelation's inspiring vision – "All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (Rev. 15:4b).

This birthday party was a foretaste of that perfect, future reality. Also, it was a special birthday because an arduous, traumatic journey had taken place to arrive at that day.

Laurier and Desiree, both in their early 30s, had arrived in Canada two and a half years earlier along with their first child, Estelle. Our church community, Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, had sponsored the Rwandans who had separately fled their homeland during the 1994 genocide when they were teenagers. Several years and countries later, during which they had met and married, they arrived in South Africa. God answered their prayers for a new home and country, as well as our refugee committee's prayers for guidance as to which family profile to choose to sponsor. God gave us to each other as gifts for his glory.

Refugee sponsorship is a doorway to blessed multicultural relationships. When refugee sponsorship is based on a desire to do God's will by caring for the oppressed, it becomes an avenue for experiencing the joy – though only in part, "for now we see through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12a, KJV) – of what it will be like when all nations and peoples live in harmony in the new heaven and earth. Re-

lationships will then be as they were originally intended to be – joyful, pleasurable, loving, and God-glorifying – for even now, as we await the fulfilment of that time, we know that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28).

A bigger world

Laurier, Desiree, their children, and other refugees sponsored by our church community have taught me so much. My world is bigger now because of them. The Rwandan genocide isn't just a distant, abstract event written about by Romeo Dallaire in *Shake Hands with the Devil*. It was the defining moment in Rwanda's history that brought Laurier and Desiree into my life and the lives of many others here in Canada. When I think of what these two young people experienced – fleeing their homeland, losing family members in violent ways, moving from country to country, and finally making the transition to life in Canada – I am humbled by God's grace and their courage. Their presence in my life has heightened my awareness of the freedom I have in Canada, freedom which includes the chance to meet and enjoy people who are different from me.

An old Celtic saying states, "We live in the shelter of each other." That shelter is found not only amongst our "own kind," people with similar eating habits, skin color, ways of thinking, and manners of dress, but also in the shelter of others who are very different from us. It is a shelter in which we can explore our differences, taste each other's food, cuddle each other's children, cry and laugh with each other, dispel our false notions about each other, and worship God together.

As I write, the refugee committee of my church community is preparing for the arrival of an extended family of eight Columbians. Obviously, the ensuing multicultural journey will be different from the one with Laurier and Desiree because Columbia is not Rwanda. And, yet, it will be similar. God is giving us to each other as gifts for his glory. ➤

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Features

Christ's community is multicultural

Sue Kuipers

Once I was visiting a church when, part way through the service, I had the strangest sensation that something was "off." At first I was puzzled. The format was similar to my home church, the songs were familiar, and the people were friendly, so what was it? Suddenly it dawned on me that everyone was Caucasian and it looked... well, frankly, it looked weird!

I am both a youth pastor and a law enforcement chaplain in a remarkably diverse community. For example, a local high school has recorded over 40 languages spoken in the homes of its students. Fortunately, our church reflects the same diversity as its community. Our congregation includes those who are immigrants from many countries, those who are first, second or third generation Americans as well as those who trace their heritage from people indigenous to North America. One Sunday a visiting pastor called his wife after leading our worship service and excitedly told her: "Honey, I've seen what heaven will look like!" But diversity and multicultural relationships are not just about ancestral geography or the hue of a person's skin. It is a much deeper and complex subject that requires honest self-examination as well as a willingness to listen to each other and, more importantly, to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit.

The teens in our after-school outreach program often have parents from two or more ethnic origins and faith traditions. A student might have one parent who is Hispanic/Catholic while the other is Fijian/Buddhist. In my work with the police department, I have to be aware of and sensitive to many forms of faith as well as cultural restrictions and observations. Within the department and community there are those who identify their religious beliefs as Christian, Agnostic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Atheist, Rastafarian, along with various other aboriginal and spiritual identities.

I am first and foremost a follower of Jesus and that is a non-negotiable stance. How does one integrate one's faith in the midst of such diversity without compromise to the Gospel? I believe that Jesus himself set the example for us. Throughout his ministry, he interacted with a very diverse population: Jews, Romans, Samaritans, and Gerasenes, just to name a few. He, and subsequently his disciples, ministered to people from a wide variety of racial, cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds.

Imitating Christ's humility

What stands out to me is that Jesus always treated people, no matter their circumstance, with respect – even those with whom he disagreed. He was open and honest, never flinching from the truth, but by no means rude or hateful. His humility and love always trumped his rightful place as the Lord of lords (Philippians 2:5-11). The Apostle Paul would later define the character of this divine love in 1 Corinthians 13.

For me, this translates into the following guidelines for relating to the wide variety of people God puts in my path:

Focus on the things that we as broken, fallible hu-

man beings hold in common, rather than on that which divides us.

Be discerning about what is "biblical" and what is "cultural" in my own understanding of norms and expectations in social interactions.

Let love, as demonstrated through Christ, be my guide. Err on the side of grace rather than on being "right."

I've just finished a class to prepare three teenagers to make their Profession of Faith/Baptism. Their stories are unique, yet, in some ways, typical of the kids in my ministry. How they came to faith in Christ takes my breath away. Destinee, one of my students, wrote a personal narrative as an assignment at her public high school. With her permission, here is her unedited story, in her own words.

Personal narrative of Destinee June 6th, 2011

Life, many ask what it is like and what your life has been like. My life has been hard. I was born while my mom was only 16. My grandparents didn't have much money so it was hard for my mom to be a teen mom. My biological dad was in jail while I was born and my mom got with my stepdad who has been in my life since I was a month old. My parents have taught me right. I have moved a lot, but it grew my ability to adapt to a new setting or environment very easily and brought my social skills up. This is why I think I am such an outgoing and social person.

When I was younger I saw a lot of things that hurt me. Many things have happened and me seeing all these things I think has made me very strong. Being around drugs, alcohol, and fighting in my neighbor hoods that I grew up in was not good for a young child. It hurts me to see people in my life dies from multiple things. Also close people who were like aunties and uncles to me. I saw my auntie beat; I was almost molested when I was in the 6th grade. I always wondered why me, why do all these things happen to me? What did I do deserve to all this hurt and pain. I now realize it all happened for a reason

and to realize that it happens every day to lots of people.

I always thought that from 7th -9th grade my life was horrible and I had it bad; but now I am very grateful for what I do have. I see many people don't have a house or food or are homeless. Poverty is a big issue and now I see that I took everything I had for granite.

I almost got kidnapped by my biological dad. He wanted to see me and my parents agreed to it. So I went with him the week before father's day weekend. He tried to keep me when my parents told him when to bring me back. I was so scared because he wouldn't even let me talk to my mom. I was only in the 4th grade and I truly didn't know what was going on. I was confused and scared and thought I would never see my family or friends ever again.

Sports have also shaped me into a strong individual. I have played many sports since the 4th grade. Like basketball, volleyball, baseball, soccer, and cheerleading. Having to cut my practices in half was a little hectic but sports kept me out of trouble and I liked to play.

My grandpa has always been a big influence in my life, and the person I can go to for anything. He is very smart and such a sweetheart. He is the best grandpa that anyone can ask for. He has always told me the truth about everything and that is a great quality for someone to have. He tells it how it is, no matter what it is.

I have always been told to go for what I want, like how I want to be a vet. Whatever I want I can achieve it if I want it bad enough. I know my family has always wanted what is best for me and my mom has been by my side 24/7. I have always been a leader, and always do what is expected and sometimes go above and beyond. I always get my work done proficiently so if anything is wrong I can go back and fix it to make it better. My life is very focused around church. It's like my second home; I'm always there. It makes me feel amazing to be able to help with whatever I can. God is a big factor in my life and he has wanted me to take the road of helping others to do the right things and find ways to help others. I know I can do whatever I want to do and find a way to achieve it, and do it to the best of my ability; so I can make my family proud and be the first to go to a 4 year college and show them I can make a difference and be a role model to all my cousins and my sister.

It's been a privilege to guide Destinee into her destiny as a Christian believer. As I live and work in a multicultural setting, I pray that I may model something of Jesus's welcoming presence and his humility, something of his respect and his love for the human heart within, regardless of the racial, cultural or ethnic covering with which it is clothed.

I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 8:11

Sue Kuipers is an associate pastor at Christ's Community Church in Hayward, California, where she ministers as both a youth pastor and law enforcement chaplain.



Teens from Christ's Community Church in Hayward, California.

Features

COMMENT



Bert Witvoet

What is the world coming to? Children and teenagers at the Lord's Supper without doing profession of faith? Did the Christian Reformed Synod of 2011 turn a dignified observance of a holy supper that needed to be approached in solemn discernment into a frivolous consumption of a Sunday morning snack? Where are the long white tables with elders standing guard at strategic corners making sure that no one in good standing is absent and no one under discipline dares to sit down? Where are the silent processions to and from the four or five successive tables – the men with their dark Lord Supper suits and the women in their subdued dresses and hats? Where are the humbled partakers with faces staring at the spotless tablecloth, wondering whether they are worthy to be at this holy commemorative meal?

Fortunately for them, our forebears had a week to examine themselves, and many of them must have concluded that they were suitably sinful and equally repentant to qualify. Besides, the minister reading the form for the Lord's Supper did say that you should be "minded henceforth to heartily lay aside all enmity, hatred, and envy, and earnestly resolve henceforward to live in true love and unity with [your] neighbour." So good intentions also count for something.

We as children could not, of course, participate. But we did enjoy the activity in front of the church. On a Lord's Supper Sunday we were allowed to sit in the gallery and watch the proceedings with a fair bit of interest. How well did the pastor pour the wine? Could you actually see the red fluid cascade through the air into the long chalices? Did anyone drop their cube of white bread while passing the silver plate? How many participants would there be left for the last table, and how uncomfortable would they look when it was down to four or five?

A long process

I for one am glad that our church has gradually moved away from some of these past rituals and that Synod decided to separate profession of faith from partaking of the Lord's Supper. But I wonder why it took so long? I remember hearing discussions 50 years ago that children belong at the Table of our Lord. We say so at baptism: "God graciously includes our children in his covenant, and all his promises are for them as well as us. Jesus himself embraced little children and blessed them; and the apostle Paul said that children of believers are holy." So holy children, included in the covenant and recipients of all God's promises, belong in

Thieves and children at the Lord's Table

all the church's acts of worship, don't they?

And then the CRC form for the baptism of children adds the following comment: "So, just as children of the old covenant received the sign of circumcision, our children are given the sign of baptism." Why not extend that logic and say, "Just as the children of the old covenant took part in the Passover meal, so our children should take part in the Lord's Supper." Well, that's what the Study Committee report "Affirming Baptism and Forming Faith" did, and Synod agreed.

But why did we not make this decision earlier? I think it's because of how the church interpreted 1 Corinthians 11, in which Paul explains that participants should "discern the body." Discernment was thought of as an adult responsibility. How can a child discern the body? After all, children should be seen but not heard. The report says that children can have faith and can participate in an age-appropriate way. That's the key – a child's faith is no less than an adult's faith. In the same way, a child can in an age-appropriate way live in true love and unity with her neighbour (sibling and parent) and thereby honour the memory of Christ's sacrifice. Throughout the years the Christian Reformed Church has shed much of this unnecessary and unhelpful solemnity around the Lord's Supper celebration. It actually is beginning to look more and more like a celebration.



An unhelpful practice

Which could not be said of the way we used to celebrate the Lord's Supper in Holland in the '40s. Professing members "celebrated" the Lord's Supper only four times a year, lest it become habit or superstition. The Sunday before the actual event, a form of preparation was read. The intent was that the participants would examine themselves carefully that week in order not "to eat and drink judgment to themselves." The form of preparation made it very clear that all "idolaters; all who invoke deceased saints, angels, or other creatures ... all who confide in sorcery, fortune telling, charms ... all murderers, quarrelsome persons ... all adulterers, fornicators, drunkards, thieves, usurers, robbers, gamblers, covetous persons ... shall abstain from this food, which Christ has appointed only for his believers, lest their judgment and condemnation be

made the heavier."

The whole preparation ceremony often appeared to be enveloped in a mist of artificiality. What was so special about that week before the actual consumption of bread and wine in commemoration of Jesus' death? Should believers not avoid sorcery and fornication all year round? And when was the last time you saw a bunch of murderers, thieves and drunkards burst into the sanctuary and snatch up all the seats around the Table of the Lord? And if they did, would that be such a bad thing? Miscreants at the Table would deepen the mystery of God's grace. Come to think of it, wasn't there a thief hanging next to Jesus when he gave up his body and his blood? And didn't that thief accompany Jesus into Paradise without a week of preparation? And didn't his judgment and condemnation, instead of being made heavier, just disappear into the thin air of Golgotha? The thought of preparing oneself a week before the Lord's Supper also had a very heavy, soul-searching quality to it, leading many to think that, in spite of all the Reformed teachings about justification by faith, they were not worthy to partake.

Severe judgment

A friend of mine who lives in South Africa did not at all like the way the church guarded the holiness of the Supper. One time, during the week of preparation, two elders visited him and his wife. The brothers wanted to ascertain whether my friend and his wife were walking before the face of the Lord in true sincerity. If the answer was yes, they were prepared to joyfully invite him and his wife to the Table of the Lord. My friend disliked the procedure and called it a form of idolatry. Wrong thing to say. The next thing he knows, both he and his wife were placed under the second step of discipline (no need to bother with the first step, apparently) for rejecting "the means of grace." Since when is a visit by two elders a "means of grace"?

My friend and his wife, having no wish to see the process of excommunication through to the end, promptly resigned their membership in the church, and that was that. Ever since then, his wife no longer wants anything to do with the Christian faith. He does go to one or other church again from time to time because he knows that it's the only place he can hear the Word of God preached "in the flesh." But he will not become a member.

My friend was right. The aura around the Lord's Supper had become a form of idol worship. What passed for holiness was, in fact, unexamined traditionalism of the worst kind. The knee jerk reaction of his consistory smacked of pharisaical indignation.

Various kinds of meaningless preparation rituals developed in our Reformed churches. I do remember reading how an elder jumped on his bike one Saturday evening to make the rounds in his district to make sure his flock would not eat and drink judgment to

themselves. And so he arrived at a farm late at night. The farmer and his wife were already in bed. There was a knock on the window, and they heard their elder asking them, "Everything in order?"

"Yes," replied the farmer.

"Alright. Hoi!"

"Hoi," replied the farmer, and he laid himself down again behind the knitted drawers of his wife, while the sound of a bicycle on the gravel path disappeared into the night. The judgment of God had been averted.



Outrageous behaviour

I find it amazing that for the longest time our churches were led by a misinterpretation of Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul was upset about what was happening in the meetings of the church of Corinth. First of all, he was told about divisions among the believers. Secondly, he heard that when they come together for communal meals, during which time they also eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Jesus' death, they push each other aside to get to the food first, so that some of them remain hungry. They even drink excessively and get drunk. This kind of behaviour, says Paul, shows disdain for Christ and also for the body of believers. And because of this ungodly conduct, God apparently punished them with sickness and even death. They ate and drank that judgment to themselves.

Paul is not saying that a week before partaking of the Lord's Supper people need to question themselves or be questioned by elders about their walk with God. No, he is warning a particular church about their disregard for the unity of the church. How did we ever decide to incorporate this kind of "examination" into the life of the church? Of course, when we eat and drink at the Lord's Table we should do so with appropriate discernment and joyful dignity. Remembering the Lord's death is not to be done flippantly. But neither should we pray and sing hymns flippantly. It is all part of a heartfelt worship of and praise to our Lord, who invites all of us repentant sinners to gratefully participate in the Supper as many times as we want to as a church, without a special week of preparation.

So it's a joyful matter for the church when children and thieves may join all other believers in proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes. And as far as the week of preparation is concerned, a word of advice to diligent elders, "Stay home, unless you need a midnight bike ride into the countryside to reflect on your own unworthiness and God's amazing grace." 🚲

Bert Witvoet is a member of Jubilee Fellowship CRC in St. Catharines, and attended Synod 2011 for the first time as a delegate instead of reporter.

Columns

Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke



Freedom 55

Way back in the 1970s, London Life coined the phrase "Freedom 55." A slick ad campaign showed images of fit-looking "mature" adults skiing down powdery mountain slopes, fishing on tranquil lakes and sailing off into glorious horizons (much like today's lottery commercials, come to think of it).

The idea was that a young person who regularly invested small amounts of money over a long period of time would be able to retire comfortably at the youthful age of 55. Of course, when you're in your twenties, 55 seems positively ancient. But Jack, who was working as a welder at the time, decided to sign up, hoping to preserve some of his weekly paycheck for the proverbial rainy day.

A few years later, with the help of his parents, he bought the farm that we've called home for the past 33 years. By then he had amassed the whopping sum of \$1600 in his life insurance/investment plan. There were no more funds available to add to it. This farm became our retirement plan. He cashed in the policy and used the money for farm expenses. It was that much less capital for us to borrow in those early days.

Time flies. Jack turned 55 in June. In August I will do the same. We tease each other about the freedom 55 concept. Whenever we go out for supper, blow off an afternoon on the motorbikes or map out a vacation, it's all part of the plan. We may even find a Shoney's restaurant when traveling through the U.S., just to experience a senior's discount first-hand. But honestly, I can hardly believe we've already hit this milestone.

I read a blog recently where the writer lamented the tragedy of working hard for 30+ years for the sole purpose of enjoying life in retirement. He quoted a sad statistic to make his point: "If you didn't like your career, there was a 43 percent higher rate of death [within] 10 years post retirement" (careerjoy.com).

I suppose one might conclude that if you don't like your career but you want to stay alive, you had better not retire. Of course, the blogger advocated forgetting freedom 55 and pursuing "freedom now!"

The best investment

As believers we can agree, but it's a different kind of freedom. After all, the Bible urges us to rejoice in the Lord always and to learn

contentment, whatever our circumstances. It's worth noting that contentment is a learned skill and not something that just comes naturally. Most of us deal with certain situations that we cannot change, so we need to adjust our attitude rather than our circumstances. Regardless of what we're up against, we have the freedom in Christ to bring it to the Lord and fully expect his help to cope with any vicissitude.

I remember a series of commercials a few years back that pictured people visiting themselves thirty years into the future. The message was clear – what your future looks like depends on how you invest today. Do you want to spend your golden years flipping burgers in a fast food joint, or would you prefer basking on a Caribbean beach?

I daydreamed about what I would say to myself 30 years ago if I had the opportunity. I came up with lots of trivial tidbits – stuff like "Invest in a company called Microsoft."

However, I only have one nugget of sage advice that I could whisper into my own 25 year-old ear if it were possible: "Trust God. Read your Bible and spend time talking to the Lord every day, no matter what. The busier, the more chaotic, the scarier things get, the more you need your devotional time. There is no better investment. The interest rate is unbeatable and the dividends are eternal."

I can imagine my parting exchange with myself before I return back to the future.

Heidi now: "Go read Ecclesiastes. The reason that life feels futile is because it is."

Heidi then: "That's encouraging. Thanks a lot."

Heidi now: "Seriously. Look it up. But there's a marvellous way to deal with it. Maybe you should memorize Ecclesiastes 2: 24-25."

Heidi then: "Sure. Later."

Heidi now: "Meaningless! I rest my case."

I have no regrets. I wouldn't return to life 30 years ago if I could. Memories, as fond as they are, will suffice. I'm thankful that life isn't over at 55. I still have a lot to be thankful for and the Lord knows how much time remains ahead of me. Because of him I have the freedom to enjoy each and every day.

Hmmm ... I wonder if it's too late to sign up for Freedom 55. >

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ont.

Artful-Eye

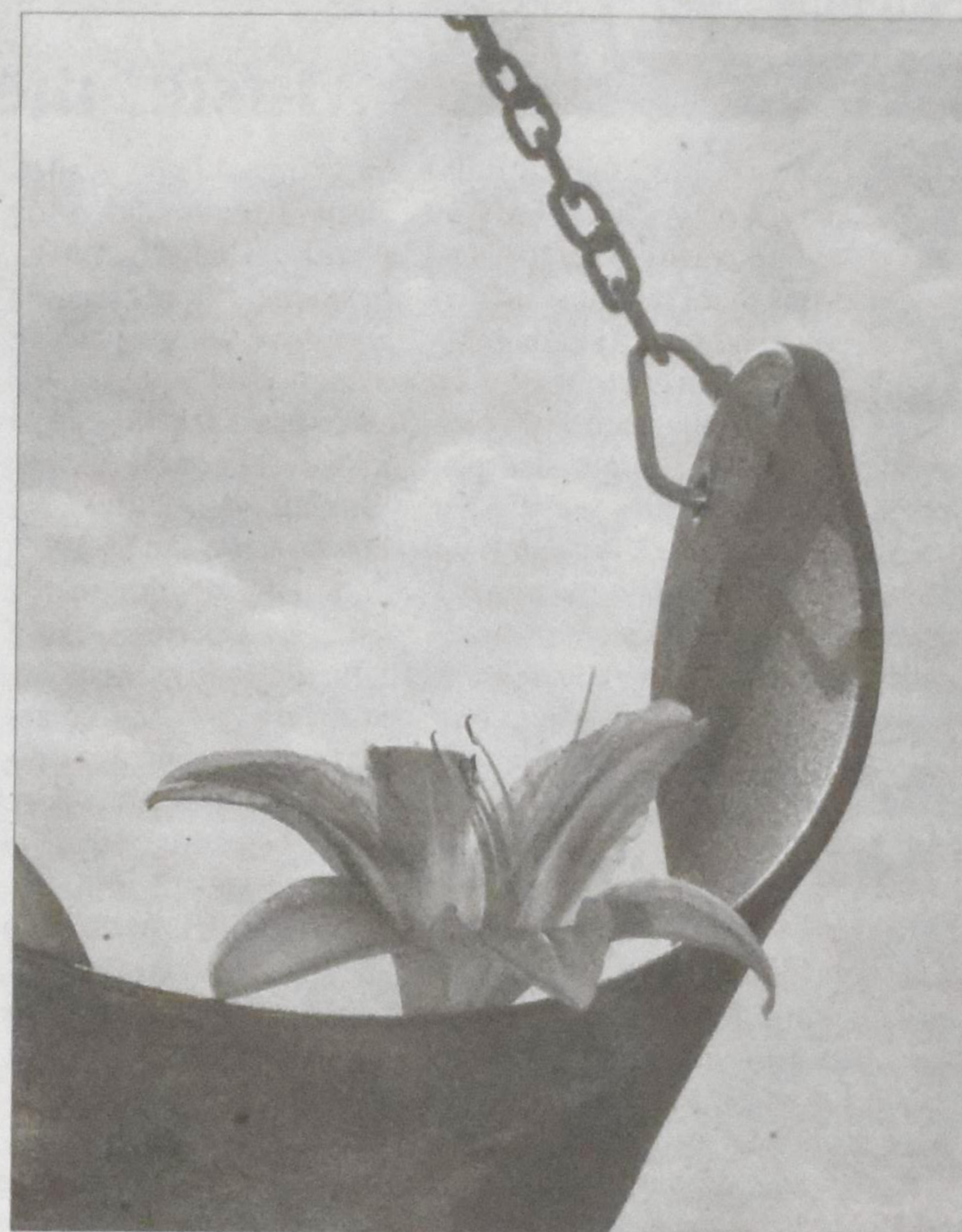


Photo by Marianne VanderSpek.

She is a photographer and farmer living near Florence, Ont.

Martyr

In memory of Marwa El-Sherbini, d. 1 July 2009
in Dresden, Germany.

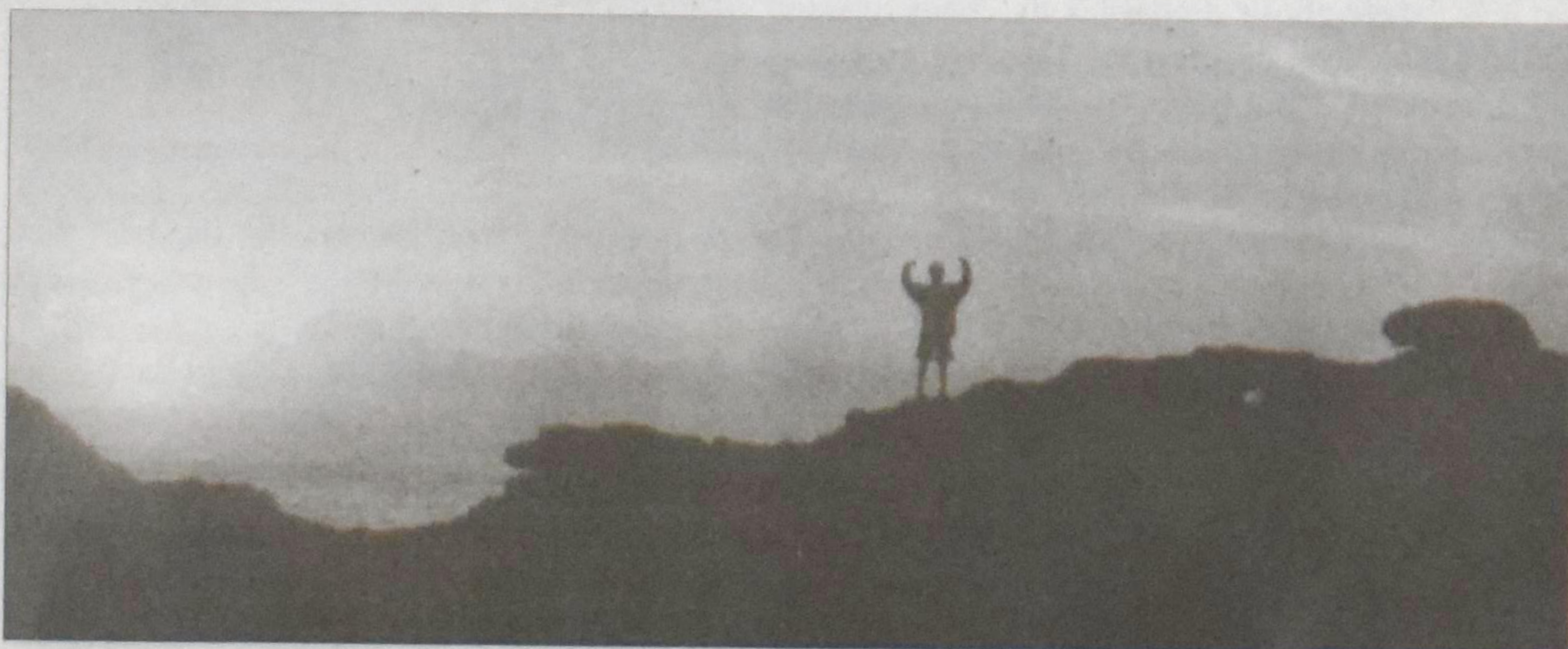
It all began on the playground.
Her three-year-old son tugged at her skirts.
A grown man sat on the swing.
Please allow my son to use the swing, she said.
"Go back where you came from," he shouted.
"Terrorist. Whore. You've no right to be here."

She'd been a handball champion
in Alexandria, earned a degree in Pharmacy,
married a Geneticist, who came to Dresden
to work in the Max Planck Institute.
How dare he speak to her like that in front of her son?
To him she was just a woman in a headscarf. Noxious Muslim.
She called the police. He was arrested and fined.
It should have ended then and there.

But he fought the fine,
compelled her to meet him in the courtroom.
Three months pregnant, she came with husband and son,
all she had. In front of the judge
he shouted: "You have no right to live,"
pulled out a knife, stabbed her eighteen times.
Everyone stood still. Only her husband rushed to her side,
shared the stab wounds, was shot mistakenly by police.

In Egypt where thousands came to her funeral
they call her the headscarf martyr,
but her son still calls her mama
when he looks behind the picture of the smiling woman,
her dark eyes shining with love,
for the one who asked if he could have
a turn on the playground swing.

Ann Hostettler is the author of *Empty Room with Light*, a collection of poems, and editor of *A Cappella: Mennonite Voices in Poetry*. She is a professor at Goshen College in Indiana.



Columns

My Window Seat

Mendelt Hoekstra



In my professional life, I play. I play a lot. Nearly all of the Music Therapy sessions that I facilitate involve me playing and singing. My three main instruments are piano, guitar and my voice, but in an average week I might also play accordion, harmonica, penny whistle and many types of drums. On a slow day I will play and sing three hours a day, and on a better day I will play and sing for six or seven. I play during the Music Therapy sessions for Bethesda, the organization where I am blessed to serve, as well as approximately 12 of Bethesda's partner agencies. One of those partner agencies is Upper Canada Lodge, a well-run long term care facility in the quaint town of Niagara-On-The-Lake. I always have a wonderful time, serving the group by engaging them with the music, with their peers and with their emotions. Each session I sit near a charming woman named Mrs. Ruth McGowan. She insists I call her "Ruth," and although I do, I don't feel respectful because she is nearly 66 years older than me. I'm 37. I will save you the math; she turns 103 this month. Although now blind, she is still very sharp and remembers all the "old" music. Just this week I was introducing a new song – a jazz standard

by Thomas "Fats" Waller, Harry Brooks and Andy Razaf called Ain't Misbehavin'. It's a swinging jazz love song in which a man expresses to his sweetheart that he is not kissing anyone else, but "saving all his love" for her. It came out in 1929. When I introduced the song, as I normally do, I talked about its meaning and how we can relate that song to something today or reminisce the past. When I mentioned that the song came out in 1929, however, Mrs. McGowan didn't have to think twice. "I remember when that song came out," she said. It was beautiful.

And still counting...

I'm at the point in my career when requests for musical gigs outnumber the ones I can accept. It is a very nice problem to have; I feel blessed to have it. It means that when someone asks me to perform at a concert, anniversary, wedding, party or other event, I can, along with a consultation with



Shannon, pick and choose which ones seem worth taking myself away from the family.

Recently I received a request that I didn't hesitate to accept. It was from a daughter of a couple who live at Upper Canada Lodge, and the request was to play for her parents' upcoming wedding anniversary. Their seventieth anniversary. 70 years married. Many people don't live to seventy themselves, let alone stay married to the same person for

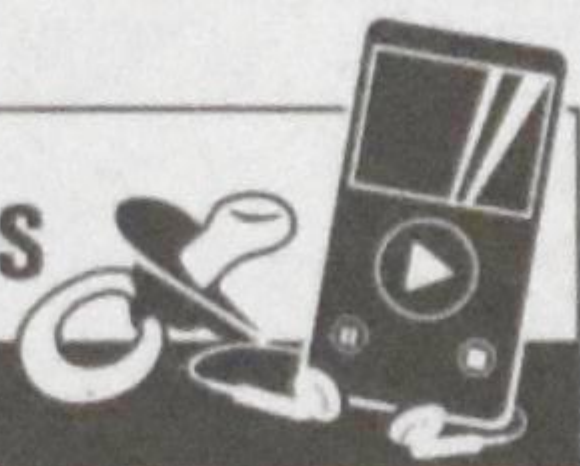
that long. I jumped at the opportunity and asked what kind of music they would like me to play. The parents, ages 92 and 93, still physically and mentally healthy, gave me a whole list of music from the 1920s, 30s and 40s – an era that I love to play and sing. These two people were married in London, England relatively late, at ages 22 and 23, during World War II. They were married on a Friday and he left for his tour in the military on the next Monday. He didn't see his wife for four and a half years. He didn't see the first four years of their oldest child's life. But they lived to tell the tale. Literally. After he retired from the military, they opened and operated a pub in London for 30 years and then moved to Canada and settled in Niagara-On-The-Lake.

When I told him I was approaching my one-year anniversary with my wife, I asked him for some advice. His answer? "I take a shot of whiskey every morning. It gets you going." When this is the routine of someone who is fit, 93 and married 70 years, it's difficult to argue. ➤

Mendelt Hoekstra (mendelt.hoekstra@gmail.com) is the director of the Music Therapy Program at Bethesda, an organization that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives near St. Catharines, Ont. with his wife and five children.

Toddlers to Teens

Denise Dykstra



Edmontonians are good at summer. We don't get very much of it so we don't waste a single minute. When the weather turns nice we spend as much time as we can outside, soaking up sunshine like our lives depend on it.

That's what brought our family to the lake one day last month. A group of friends camping close by invited us over for the day, and the opportunity to catch a few rays was too good to pass up. The forecast called for some clouds, but really, how bad could they be?

The kids and I dug out our lifejackets, filled a cooler with snacks and loaded the minivan. We were excited, ready to enjoy the warmer side of God's creation.

And enjoy it we did. We dragged our piles of paraphernalia to the beach, put our sunglasses on and made ourselves comfortable. It was glorious – for a short while. But then the first clouds started rolling in and I realized we'd been a tad optimistic. *Uh oh, this isn't a good sign*, I thought, and automatically scanned the beach for my children.

"Yahoo!" my eight-year-old daughter was yelling when I spotted her. "Now I don't need to put on more sunscreen!" Talk about looking on the bright side. I smiled

and called her over so I could re-lather her dripping wet body anyways.

Before long the whole sky was covered with haze. And, unfortunately, the clouds brought a feeling of coolness with them. We adults grabbed what dry towels we could and wrapped them around our shivering shoulders. We huddled together, doubled over with our heads held low. Our kids, on the other hand, headed straight for the lake. "Wow, this water is warm now," cried my five-year-old son blissfully. And he and the others took full advantage of the contrast in temperature, splashing around and diving under the surface to avoid the cool air for another fun-filled hour.

Around that time the wind started to blow. Slowly at first, but eventually in gale-like proportions. *Surely this will deter those water rats*, I thought, grabbing flying lawn chairs and covering my eyes to protect my contact lenses from sand particles. But no, oh no. The kids just jumped in their dinghies and let the wind propel them down and around the shoreline. When they reached the end of the line they hopped out, braced themselves against the blustery breeze and dragged their blow-up boats back to where they started so they could play "sailing school" a mere twenty times more.

Determined delight

And then we felt them – raindrops. They were light and somewhat sparse, but there was no mistaking it. We started packing up, certain our children would come running for cover. We waited and waited but no little people joined us. They were just too busy. Doing what? Playing Noah's Ark, of course. And they probably would have done so long into the night if we hadn't put our foot down and shuttled them back to our vehicles after the first flash of lightning.

The truth is, even the light show coming down the beach towards them didn't faze these diehard kids. They wanted to keep on playing! They weren't worried about being exposed or vulnerable to being struck by lightning. And they certainly didn't care that water is an excellent conductor of electricity. Their only concern was that their beach day was coming to an end. And they didn't like it. They were enjoying themselves in the great outdoors, even though it was cloudy, cold, windy and raining.

Yes, Edmontonians are good at summer. From a very young age.

And if I needed further proof, I got it later that night as I tucked my youngest daughter



into bed. "You know what the best thing about today was, Mom?" she asked me, her eyes shining brightly.

I didn't know – but I should have. "... that we can do it all again tomorrow." ➤

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five.

That 'perfect' summer day

Columns

The Public Square

Harry Antonides



Aid to the Church in Need, a United Kingdom-based organization, has just released a document called *Persecuted and Forgotten? A report on Christians oppressed for their faith*.* It makes for riveting – and heartbreaking – reading about the persecution of millions of fellow Christians in other parts of the world. As the title suggests, this ugly reality is often ignored in the free West.

Here we are prone to take for granted our precious freedom of belief and worship. But should we not also use our freedom to reach out to those who are being harassed, imprisoned, tortured or forced to become refugees under conditions we cannot imagine? The very least we can and should do is know what is happening and help where we can by publicizing and protesting the horrendous sufferings endured by millions.

Does anybody hear?

Persecuted and Forgotten? covers 33 countries, ranging from Afghanistan to Yemen. Archbishop Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, begins his Foreword with a reference to Luke 14:27 where Jesus says that his followers must be prepared to take up their cross. The Archbishop writes that cross bearing is a reality, especially in the Middle East, where to be a Christian involves “great sacrifice.” He explains,

“All too often and in many places, Christians suffer verbal abuse, discrimination in the workplace, taunts in the media and various threats. On some occasions, their homes and churches are burnt, and people – themselves, their loved ones and neighbours, even their priests and bishops – are killed. Those who live in the shadow of violence and intolerance may struggle to understand the meaning of their suffering. Weeping and crying, they often ask themselves: ‘Does anybody hear our cry? How many atrocities must we endure before somebody somewhere comes to our aid?’”

Persecuted and Forgotten? is concerned with violent acts against Christians, whether they be Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant. Each country’s chapter begins with a graph, showing the population size, major religion adherents, and the percentage of Christians, followed by an overview of the human rights violations they endure. Then it provides information about persons and families who have directly experienced the cruelty of imprisonment and even death.

Modern-day exodus

The situation for Christians has worsened in many countries, especially in Iraq but also in the Middle East and foremost in Egypt, Lebanon, Pakistan and Turkey. What has changed is that Christians in Muslim countries are especially vulnerable, while those engaged in crimes against them have become

The most persecuted religion today

more blatant in their contempt for the church. In the introduction to this report, John Pontifex writes that Muslim extremists want to eliminate Christians from their land. He cites the 2008-2009 attacks in Mosul and the October 2010 siege of the Syrian Catholic Cathedral in Baghdad as instances in an ongoing and determined campaign to destroy Christianity.

He states that in the last 150 years, the exodus of Christians from the Middle East has assumed biblical proportions, most obvious in Iraq. At the last census taken in 1987, there were 1.4 million Christians in Iraq. By 2003 that number had declined to 800,000; in 2011 it was further reduced to 500,000. But leading Catholic prelates have said that the real figure could be as low as 150,000. The Christian population of Bethlehem declined from 85 percent in 1948 to 12 percent today.

Bearing witness

Besides praying for the persecuted, there are various ways we can help. One very important way is to let the suffering people know that we are aware of their hardship. We should also use that knowledge to let the light of truth shine wherever we can. Some lives have been saved by the worldwide publicity and protests against the death sentence imposed by Islamic governments on Christian converts from Islam in Afghan and Iran. (The latest report [July 12] about the Iranian pastor Youcef Nadarkhani confirms that the Iranian Supreme Court has refused to annul the death sentence.) The mainstream media, in general, does a poor job of reporting the truth about what is happening in many countries.

Finally, we should try to move governments to do all they can through their agencies, especially those focused on human rights, to demand that all countries respect the rights of all their citizens in keeping with their obligation as members of the United Nations.

Pontifex leaves us with this painful question: “Will future historians say of us that we were firsthand witnesses to the extinguishing of Christianity in the very countries where the light of our faith first took hold?” One thing is sure – we can no longer say, “We never knew it was that bad.”

Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca) spent most of his working life with the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

*This report is available for free at aidto-church.org.

Persecuted and Forgotten?



Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



Have you been fooled by what you thought was a one-litre carton of chocolate milk, but after bringing it home you discovered it was actually called “chocolate dairy beverage”? The carton looks the same as the real chocolate milk containers. You can’t miss the highlighted block of words: “Excellent source of protein. High in calcium. Low in fat.” In big letters, the width of the carton, is the word “CHOCOLATE.” Underneath, in tiny letters, it says “Dairy Beverage.”

The ingredients include “Milk ingredients, modified milk ingredients, sugar, cocoa . . .” and “if you want to know more about any of our fine products, please visit our website.” Don’t bother. The dairy company tries to put a positive spin on it, blaming the Canadian government for why the product has to be called a “beverage.” The company website says that “the change in name is a part of the Canadian government’s overall aim to improve the clarity of communication on all food packaging.”

But that’s not the real reason for the name change. The dairy companies are making the chocolate drink with cheap, imported milk by-products. Under current law, only a limited amount of fluid milk and cream can be imported tariff-free into Canada. Modified milk ingredients, however, can come in tariff-free. That includes skim milk powder, milk protein concentrates, casein, caseinates, and whey protein concentrates (which farmers used to feed to pigs).

Any “milk,” according to Canadian regulations, that contains modified milk ingredients cannot be called “milk.” The Canadian Food Inspection Agency defines modified milk ingredients as any of the following in liquid, concentrated, dry, frozen or reconstituted form: calcium-reduced skim milk, casein (used as a binding agent, also found in the wax used to shine fruits and vegetables and to fortify bread), caseinate (this protein is derived from skim milk), cultured milk products (milk products that have been altered through controlled fermentation), whey (serum byproduct created in the manufacture of cheese) and any component of milk that has been altered from the form in which it is found in milk.

Imitation ice-cream

Chocolate drinks aren’t the only de-

Deceptive dairy products

ceptive ploy to watch for. Frozen desserts are now marketed in similar packaging as real ice cream. My wife and I were shopping in a No-Frills store recently and saw a large cooler with a sign stating that Breyers ice cream was on sale for two dollars. Being careful shoppers, we noticed that there were no more than 10 to 15 containers of natural ice cream throughout the cooler, and at least 100 containers of Breyers frozen desserts. They looked identical. We took a “dessert” home and found it awful – too gummy and sugary.

Earlier this summer, the Dairy Farmers of Canada issued a warning to consumers about confusing ice cream with frozen desserts. “Avoid being fooled by frozen desserts pretending to be real ice cream . . . Look for the 100 percent Canadian Milk symbol on the package,” the DFC warned in a press release.

The warning explains that frozen desserts are made mostly of edible vegetable oils such as palm kernel oil or coconut oil, which are “the very same oils consumers are trying to avoid in their diets.” “Consumers are often unaware that the brands they buy and trust are not ice cream at all,” says DFC.

The Canadian cow

Chocolate dairy beverages and frozen desserts are not made with Canadian-produced milk or milk by-products. The dairy companies won’t mention that!

Watch for the iconic blue cow on the package or container. The blue cow is the consumers’ guarantee that a product is “the real deal and made with 100 percent Canadian product.”


Speaking of ice cream, have you noticed how containers and packages are getting smaller all the time? A few years ago they were 2.2 litres, then went down to 2 litres, 1.89 litres and now they are 1.5 and smaller.

I called Unilever Canada (maker of the ice cream we had in the house) and was told they have indeed been making the containers smaller. Why? The woman from consumer relations said, “The ingredients are so expensive and consumers don’t want to pay more for ice cream. Instead of increasing the price we had no choice but to make the containers smaller.” No price increase? Huh!

Meindert van der Galien is an eastern Ontario (Renfrew) farmer and agricultural writer.



Classifieds

| Anniversaries | | Obituary |
|---|--|--|
|  <p>With joy and thanksgiving we celebrate God's faithfulness in blessing our parents,</p> <p>HERMAN AND MARGARET (Vanderlaan) GEERTS</p> <p>with 45 years of Marriage.</p> <p>July 30, 1966 Psalm 37:4</p> <p>With much love from</p> <p>George & Monica – Caleb, Aidan, Claire Linda</p> <p>Jennifer & Conor Brennan – Shaun, Liam, Gabriel, Sabrina Brian & Laura – Noah, Graham, Joshua</p> <p>24 Gravel Pit Rd RR 3 Dundas ON L9H 5E3</p> | <p>Portage La Prairie, Manitoba 1951</p>  <p>ALBERT AND GERDA POSTMA (nee Groenenboom)</p> <p>"In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:6</p> <p>With thankfulness to God, we invite you to celebrate with us, the 60th Anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.</p> <p>Margaret & Marinus Bakker, <i>Auburn, ON</i> Karen & Michael Stephens – Neale, Conner Ruth Anne & Michael Brown – Mikayla Michael & Courtney Bakker</p> <p>Helen & Fred Gneuchtel, <i>Georgetown, TX</i> Krystina Gneuchtel Maryann Gneuchtel & Scott Parris Kyle Gneuchtel</p> <p>Janet & Ray Beldman, <i>London, ON</i> William Beldman & Melissa Weston Andrew Beldman Jocelyn Beldman & Omari Stevens Mark Beldman</p> <p>An Open House will be held in their honour D.V. on Saturday, August 20 from 2 - 4 p.m. at London Bethel CRC – 716 Classic Dr. London</p> <p>Home address: 83 Buchan Road, London ON N5V 4H6</p> | <p>London, Ontario 2011</p>  <p>GERALD VANDEZANDE</p> <p>Peacefully on Saturday July 16, 2011 at the age of 77.</p> <p>Loving husband to Wynne, caring father of Janice and Karen, sons-in-law Paul and Steve, nurturing grandfather to Jonathan and Christian, Kristen, Jason, Jessica and Alicia, great-grandfather to Nathan and brother to Harry, Hank, George, Ben and families.</p> <p>Caring mentor and friend to an extended family and community.</p> <p>After his love for his family, Gerald lived and embraced social responsibility. His legacy was his belief in "fairness" and a voice for the voiceless. 40 years of experience in public policy development and political advocacy reflected his extraordinary dedication to his pursuit of public justice, a commitment rooted in a clear and integrally Biblical life perspective and a love for his God.</p> <p>Born in Holland on December 25, 1933 to Annie and Gerald, he always remembered with gratitude the Canadian liberators entering his village during the Second World War. Gerald immigrated to Canada in 1951.</p> <p>Former Public Affairs Director of Citizens for Public Justice, he was also actively involved with the Campaign against Child Poverty and during his life, a member of numerous social advocacy coalitions.</p> <p>Gerald received the Order of Canada in May of 2001. His order citation described him as a "powerful and respected voice for social justice". In 2005, he was awarded the Arthur Kroeger College Award in Ethics in Public Affairs.</p> <p>In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Citizens for Public Justice.</p> <p>"What does the Lord require of us? To do Justice, To love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God."</p> <p>Correspondence: 262 Pitfield Road Scarborough ON M1S 1Y7</p> |

Comment

How to react to Norway shootings

Christian Science Monitor Editorial Board (CSM)

The mass killing of 76 people July 22 by a young man in Norway deserves more sorrow than meaning. Yet Norwegians will no doubt try to draw lessons in coming days and avoid overreacting out of fear even as they grieve.

Most of the killings were at an island camp for young people sponsored by the ruling Labor Party. That makes it both particularly tragic and highly political. The confessed killer, Anders Behring Breivik, had posted convoluted reasons online to justify this mass murder, including his naive hope that such an act would spark a revolution against Norway's liberal policy toward immigration, especially of Muslims.

A democratic nation's practices on immigration and assimilation can certainly be controversial and worthy of debate. But Mr. Breivik's frustration and impatience at not getting his way in normal politics – perhaps driven by emotional problems – was no excuse for him to step outside the bounds of the law.

If he truly believes the ruling party is "importing voters" to stay



Mourning the loss of life. Breivik targeted young people in his rampage.

in power, he should have simply rallied Norwegians to his counter-view, not killed the next generation of his political opposition.

Persuasion by words and by elections must remain the tools to alter a nation's course. Using murder to change politics is inherently contradictory – there is no politics if anyone can decide to use murder.

This tragedy could easily be used in much of Europe to force the debate on immigration, such as the apparent clash of civic values between orthodox Muslim communities and traditional European society. In recent months, the leaders of Germany, Britain, and France have all declared "multicultural-

CPJ remembers . . .

Gerald Vandezande

"I first met Gerry and CPJ in the mid-1970s when we were working to stop the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. His vision came from his own deeply-felt faith tradition and ethnic group, and then expanded. His engagement in public justice was as much a part of his life as was breathing in and out! Every day I experience how Gerry's faith and personal commitment provided CPJ with this tremendous foundation upon which to build our work. As he would always sign off our chats: 'God bless you, brother!'"

—Joe Gunn, Executive Director of CPJ

See p. 20 for more on the life of Gerald Vandezande.

tors. Political groups in favor of limited government decried the 1995 bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building by Timothy McVeigh.

Breivik's confusion over his means (murder) and his ends (a harmonious Norway) is a reminder for any democracy to continually educate everyone about the basic principles for public discourse and resolving disputes.

One of those principles is a love of one's fellow citizens. Or as one of the girls from Norway's Youth Labor Movement wrote in a memorial message after the killings: "With so much hate embodied in one individual, think about how much love we all have inside us."

No single cultural or religious group has the monopoly on terrorism. Christians have and do engage in injustices and terror.

May God help us to see all peoples as fellow image-bearers and to love all equally.

Classifieds

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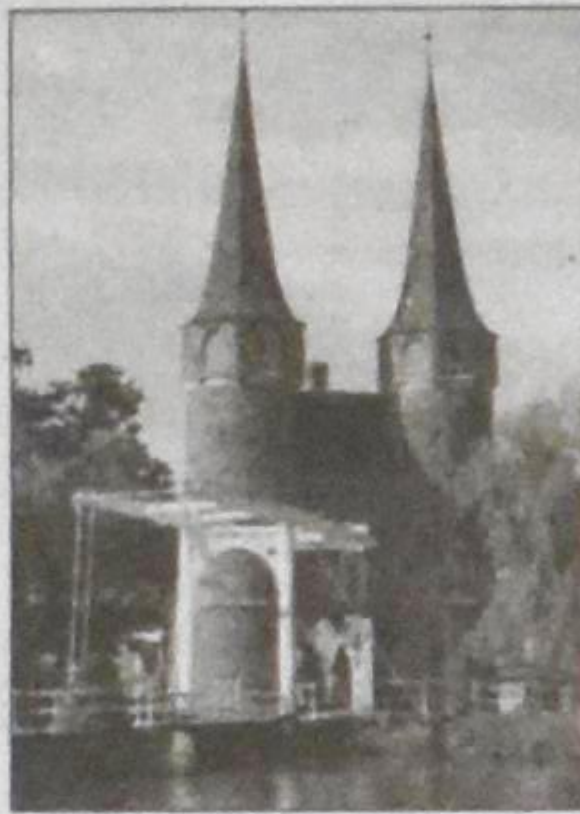
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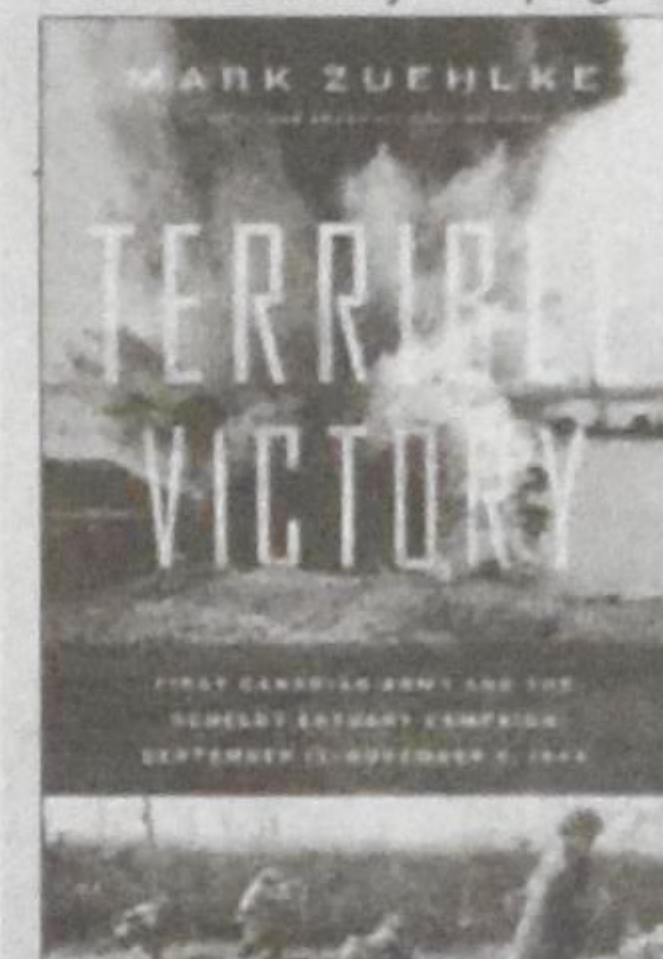
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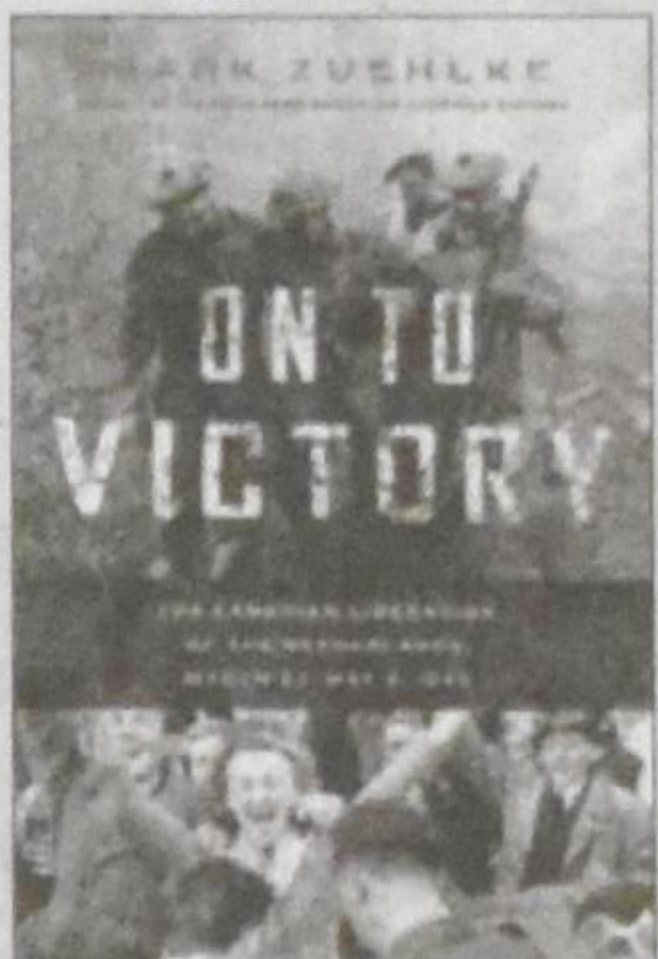
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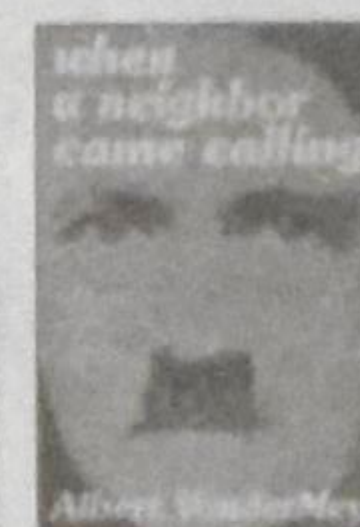
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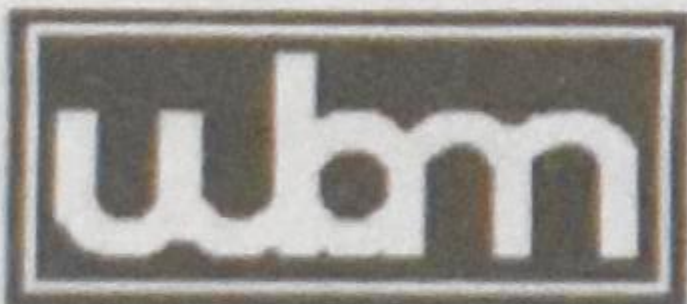
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1933

Gerald Vandezande

2011



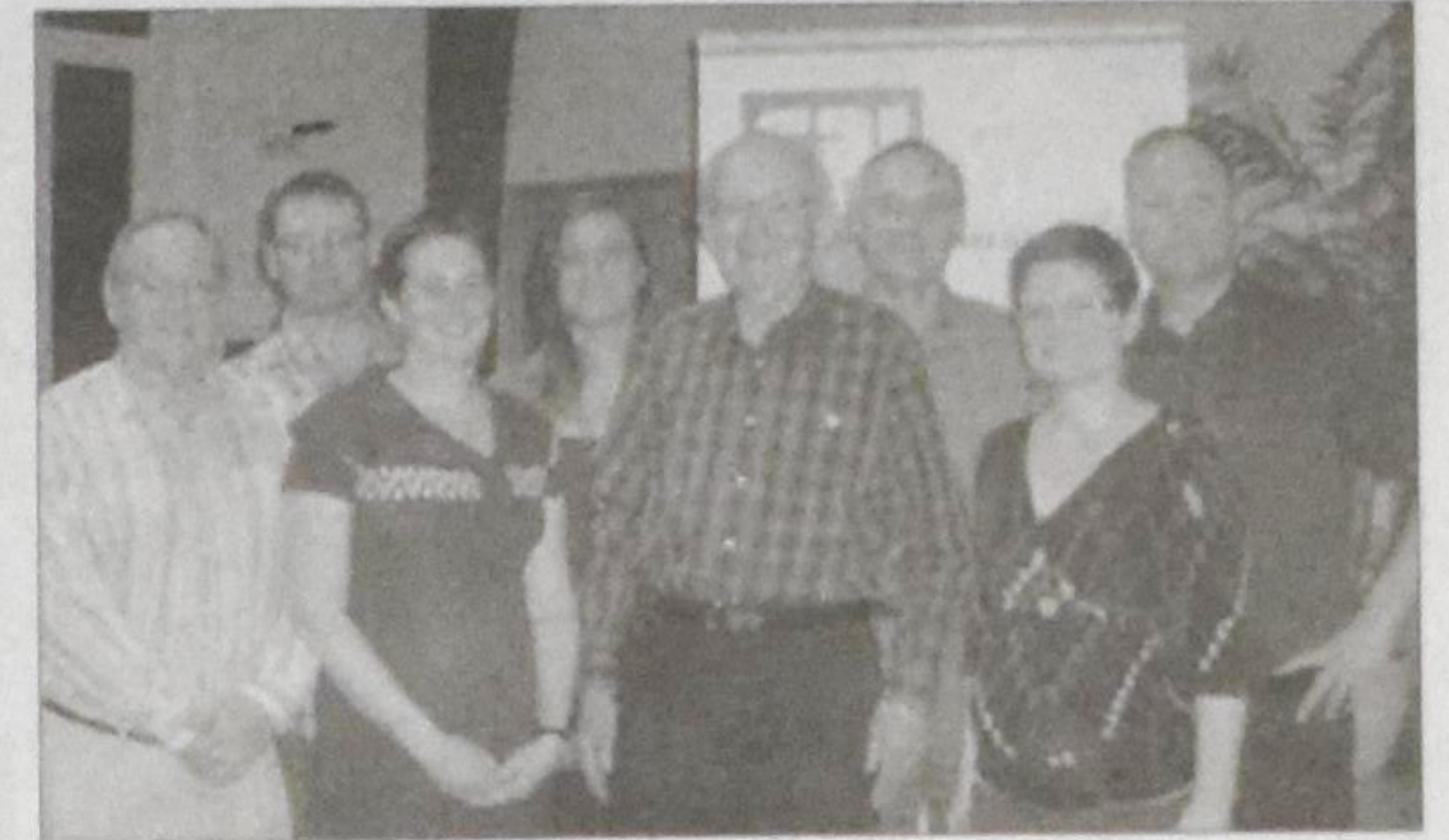
Friend John Olthuis (L) and Gerald, 1976.



John Olthuis and Gerald more recently.



Receiving the Order of Canada in 2001.



Gerald with CPJ staff, May 2011.

A celebration of his hope and life

Cal Seerveld

An unusual person has left our company on this earth – a relentless, indefatigable and blessed peace-maker. Gerald changed the direction of my life for good, as he did for many others. As friends and acquaintances we mourn the loss of Gerald with his family members. But we also offer joyful thanks to God for Gerald's stimulating life among us as he championed the cause of bringing compassionate justice to others – especially those who had no advocate, like the poor – in the circles of governing power.

Gerald chose two Scripture passages for us to hear after he passed away, to remember him by. The first challenged 21-year-old Gerald when he made public profession of his faith in Jesus Christ (I Timothy 6:11): *"But you, O man of God, run away from such matters! Instead, pursue doing justice, simple piety, faithfulness, selfless love, steadfast endurance, a gentleness of spirit. Wrestle the good struggle of being faithful: [that is,] get a good grip on the everlasting life to which you were called when you made the right public profession in the presence of many witnesses."*

This biblical injunction, as I see it, both motivated and pro-

tected Gerald throughout his life. When he and Wynne fostered and adopted children, negotiated as labour union representative with hostile management and antagonistic unions, made submissions to the hands-off Canadian government, he did not have to insure the consequences. All God required of him was to wrestle the struggle of being faithful to what counts in the long run: simply testifying to the loving, healing just doing Jesus proclaimed in practice.

Gerald's deeds were never subversive but, in line with Scripture, were thoroughly, bluntly ingenuous and winsome, because he never considered people of other faiths or of radically different positions to be enemies! They were all neighbours you tried to help see the needs of the weak and disenfranchised – cannot we rally around that in God's world?!

Advocate and counsellor

The second gospel passage is from Matthew (9:10-13): *"And it happened that as Jesus was reclining at a meal in Matthew's house, what do you know! many tax collectors and low-down sinners were coming to recline at dinner with Jesus and his disciples."*

"Seeing this the Pharisees said to Jesus' disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with the tax-collectors and scummy sinners?'"

So when Jesus heard this, he said, 'The healthy have no need of a healer, but those who are sick need a healer. Go and learn what this means: I, [the LORD God] desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I did not come, [says Jesus] to call out righteous people, but to invite sinners."

This true story captures something deep in the life attitude of Gerald. And I do not intend to imply that all the MPs in Ottawa, provincial politicians, and veteran journalists Gerald thrived on meeting with are "sinners." But Gerald was driven by the Spirit in Jesus to make all kinds of people, especially those who were ignorant of redemptive wisdom, sensitive to the godsend of freely distributing mercy to those unjustly injured rather than do-gooding which gives you yourself credits. Gerald could and did meet and mix with anyone, persistently presenting with self-effacing humour what would help those who were being denied the means to be responsible persons so they could live in hope. Being confronted by hard-hearted opposition never fazed Gerald, since he had nothing to lose: he was only a spokesperson for those who had no voice on the civil socio-economic and political scene.

Gerald was not an arm-chair follower of Jesus Christ. He was also not politically partisan, not a pressure lobbyist. His generous gift was, in circumstances where no good alternatives seemed possible, to counsel whoever would listen – a normative step which might bring structural change, a shift in policy or vision, that could lead to openings which would engender fruits of shalom.

As Moses was told by God to raise up a bronze serpent, so those who looked at it would be healed

of their plague (Num. 21:4-9), so I take the thrust of the Scripture passages Gerald selected to be his living testimony for us today as a banner to take away our sadness, and gird our loins to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). God's word for Timothy and the young Gerald, and Jesus' dining with Matthew and Jesus' terse instruction to the orthodox leaders, mean

that **not death but life with and in Jesus Christ may be our focus today**, thanks to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Gerald is not in the grave. He is with Jesus whom he loved and served while he sparkled here on earth. ➤

Cal Seerveld lives in Toronto, Ontario. He is the author, most recently, of Voicing God's Psalms. This text is part of a longer meditation given at Gerald's funeral.

Eternally seeking justice

Mark Vander Vennen

Gerald was a bridge builder. He always spoke from a position of hope, joy and laughter; cynicism was not in his vocabulary. His motto was "affirm where you can, amend where you must, and oppose if necessary." He said we are not against things, we are for things. He constantly stressed that none of us knows all of the answers; we all need to listen and learn from each other, himself included. He was a consummate strategist; he could think on his feet and talk off the cuff like no one I have ever met.

Gerald came from a tradition of Christian social democracy in the Netherlands. But what was unique about Gerald was that he did not seek to transplant an intellectual or social construct to his new country. Instead, he continually crafted a made-in-Canada solution or approach. It was not a translation. Sometimes that would get him into trouble with his own constituency. The mystery is that it was fed and sourced by engagement here with people from all stripes and all walks of life, from the most marginalized to the most powerful. As a home-grown Canadian perspective, his induction into the Order of Canada was thus no accident. And that ties into his view that the Holy Spirit is active everywhere, including in all of those engagements – who are we

to limit the work and activity of the Spirit of God?

We all know that Gerald was a walking medical miracle, and that he had near death experiences for at least 15 years. I used to tell him that he was held together by duct tape and bailer twine. One of his medical issues was that he had an enlarged heart. It was a perfect metaphor for Gerald.

12 or 13 years ago, at a public event honouring Gerald, I said that I had developed a pet theory as to why God graciously allowed Gerald to keep living and carrying on his work. I said that I think it's because God knows who he would be getting. *"How long, O Sovereign Lord, before you avenge the blood of everyone who has experienced injustice!?"* That's from Revelation Chapter 6. My theory was that God had to get himself ready for Gerald's advocacy. Gerald got a big kick out of that. Now, Gerald has a new kind of access to the throne room of the earth. He has a new avenue for advocacy, and you can bet he is using it to the full.

Gerald, you have run the good race. Goodbye my friend; all my love. It's time for another generation to step up. ➤

Mark Vander Vennen is Executive Director of Shalem Mental Health Network, and co-author of Hope in Troubled Times. He lives in Cobourg, Ontario. Mark gave the eulogy at Gerald's funeral.

Gerald Vandezande:

A brief biography

- Born in Ymuiden, the Netherlands, 1933
 - Influenced by the risks his parents took to protect Jews in Nazi-occupied Holland
 - Moved to Canada at age 17, 1950
 - Married Wynne, 1957
 - Executive secretary of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), 1961-1972
 - Co-founded the Committee for Justice and Liberty, 1961
 - Helped get CLAC recognized as a legitimate Christian Canadian union, 1963
 - Instrumental in stopping the Mackenzie Valley pipeline project, 1975 onwards
 - Executive Director of Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), 1963-1988
 - Published *Christians in Crisis: Toward Responsible Citizenship*, 1983
 - National Public Affairs Director of CPJ, 1988-1998
 - *Justice, Not Just Us: Faith Perspectives and National Priorities*, 1999
- adapted from "Gerald Vandezande – biography" by Daniela Ljomov, an intern at CPJ. For more on Vandezande's life and accomplishments, see cpj.ca.

